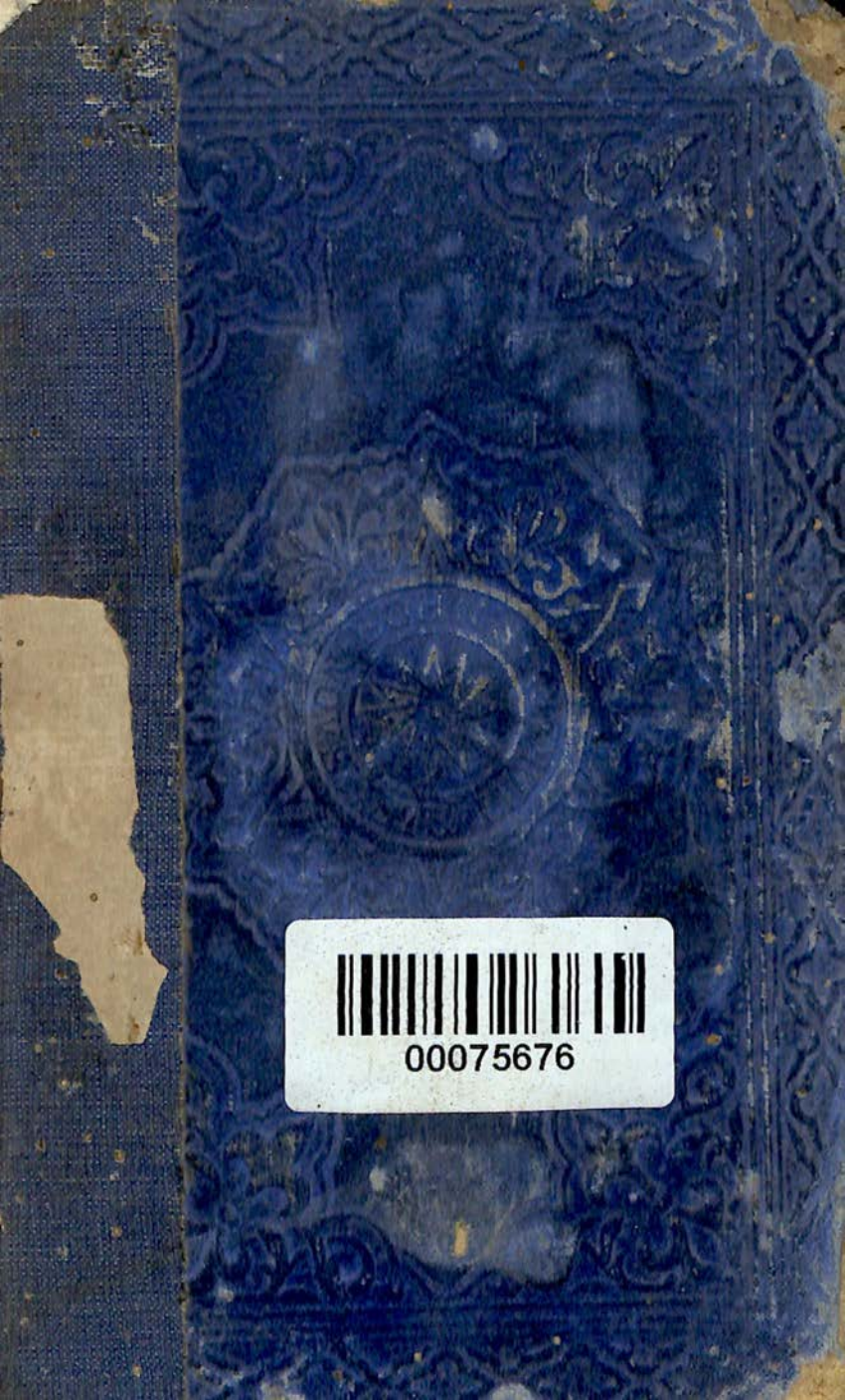
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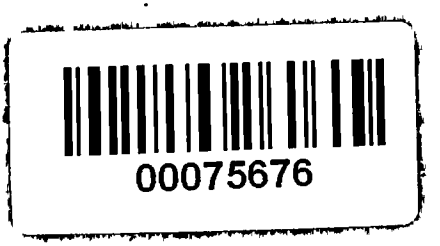

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CECILIA.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANTIQUE MANSION.

DELVILE CASTLE was situated in a large and woody park, and surrounded by a moat. A draw-bridge which fronted the entrance was every night, by order of Mr. Delvile, with the same care as if still necessary for the preservation of the family, regularly drawn up. Some fortifications still remained entire, and vestiges were every where to be traced of more; no taste was shown in the disposition of the grounds, no openings were contrived through the wood for distant views or beautiful objects: the mansion-house was ancient, large, and magnificent, but constructed with as little attention to convenience and comfort, as to airiness and elegance; it was dark, heavy, and monastic, equally in want of repair and of improvement. The grandeur of its former inhabitants was every where visible, but the decay into which it was falling rendered such remains mere objects for meditation and melancholy; while the evident struggle to support some appearance of its ancient dignity, made the dwelling and all in its vicinity wear an aspect of constraint and austerity. Festivity, joy, and pleasure, seemed foreign to the purposes of its construction; silence, solemnity, and contemplation were adapted to it only.

Mrs. Delvile, however, took all possible care to make the apartments and situation of Cecilia commodious and pleasant, and to banish by her kindness and animation the gloom and formality which her mansion inspired. Nor were her efforts ungratefully received; Cecilia, charmed by

every mark of attention from a woman she so highly admired, returned her solicitude by encreasing affection, and repaid all her care by the revival of her spirits. She was happy, indeed, to have quitted the disorderly house of Mr. Harrel, where terror so continually awakened, was only to be lulled by the grossest imposition; and though her mind, depressed by what was passed, and in suspense with what was to come, was by no means in a state for uninterrupted enjoyment, yet to find herself placed, at last, without effort or impropriety, in the very mansion she had so long considered as her road to happiness, rendered her, notwithstanding her remaining sources of inquietude, more contented than she had yet felt herself since her departure from Suffolk.

Even the imperious Mr. Delvile was more supportable here than in London: secure in his own castle, he looked around him with a pride of power and of possession which softened while it swelled him. His superiority was undisputed, his will was without control. He was not, as in the great capital of the kingdom, surrounded by competitors; no rivalry disturbed his peace, no equality mortified his greatness; all he saw were either vassals of his power, or guests bending to his pleasure; he abated therefore, considerably, the stern gloom of his haughtiness, and soothed his proud mind by the courtesy of condescension.

Little, however, was the opportunity Cecilia found for evincing that spirit and forbearance she had planned in relation to Delvile; he breakfasted by himself every morning, rode or walked out alone till driven home by the heat of the day, and spent the rest of his time till dinner in his own study. When he then appeared, his conversation was always general, and his attention not more engaged by Cecilia than by his mother. Left by them with his father, he commonly continued with him till tea-time, and then rode or strolled out to some neighbouring family, and it was always uncertain whether he was again seen before dinner the next day.

By this conduct, reserve on her part was rendered totally unnecessary; she could give no discouragement where she met with no assiduity; she had no occasion to fly where she was never pursued.

Strange, however, she thought such behaviour, and utterly impossible to be the effect of accident; his desire to avoid her seemed scrupulous and pointed, and however to the world it might wear the appearance of chance, to her watchful anxiety a thousand circumstances marked it for design. She found that his friends at home had never seen so little of him, complaints were continually made of his frequent absences, and much surprise was expressed at his new manner of life, and what might be the occupations which so strangely engrossed his time.

Had her heart not interfered in this matter, she might now have been perfectly at rest, since she was spared the renunciation she had projected, and since, without either mental exertion or personal trouble, the affair seemed totally dropt, and Delvile, far from manifesting any design of conquest, shunned all occasions of gallantry, and sedulously avoided even common conversation with her. If he saw her preparing to walk out in an evening, he was certain to stay at home; if his mother was with her, and invited him to join them, he was sure to be ready with some other engagement; and if by accident he met her in the park, he merely stopt to speak of the weather, bowed, and hurried on.

How to reconcile a coldness so extraordinary with a fervour so animated as that which he had lately shown, was indeed not easy; sometimes she fancied he had entangled not only the poor Henrietta but himself, at other times she believed him merely capricious; but that he studied to avoid her she was convinced invariably, and such a conviction was alone sufficient to determine her upon forwarding his purpose. And, when her first surprise was over, and first chagrin abated, her own pride came to her aid, and she resolved to use every method in her power to conquer a partiality so ungratefully bestowed. She rejoiced that in no instance she had ever betrayed it, and she saw that his own behaviour prevented all suspicion of it in the family. Yet, in the midst of her mortification and displeasure, she found some consolation in seeing that those mercenary views of which she had once been led to accuse him, were farthest from his thoughts, and that whatever was the state of his mind, she had no artifice to apprehend, nor design to guard against. All, therefore, that remained was to imitate his

example, be civil and formal, shun all interviews that were not public, and decline all discourse but what good breeding occasionally made necessary.

By these means their meetings became more rare than ever, and of shorter duration, for if one by any accident was detained, the other retired; till, by their mutual diligence, they soon only saw each other at dinner: and though neither of them knew the motives or the intentions of the other, the best concerted agreement could not more effectually have separated them.

This task to Cecilia was at first extremely painful; but time and constancy of mind soon lessened its difficulty. She amused herself with walking and reading, she commissioned Mr. Monckton to send her a Piano Forte of Merlin's,[1] she was fond of fine work, and she found in the conversation of Mrs. Delvile a never-failing resource against languor and sadness. Leaving therefore to himself her mysterious son, she wisely resolved to find other employment for her thoughts, than conjectures with which she could not be satisfied, and doubts that might never be explained.

Very few families visited at the castle, and fewer still had their visits returned. The arrogance of Mr. Delvile had offended all the neighbouring gentry, who could easily be better entertained than by receiving instructions of their own inferiority, which however readily they might allow, was by no means so pleasant a subject as to recompense them for hearing no other. And if Mr. Delvile was shunned through hatred, his lady no less was avoided through fear; high spirited and fastidious, she was easily wearied and dis-

[1] Merlin was a clever French mechanician, who made a public exhibition of automata of his own contriving. He improved, as well as tuned, piano-fortes, and devised carriages, swings, tables, and chairs; all called after himself. "A Merlin-chair" for invalids is often named in old books. "Merlin has been here to tune the fortepianos. He told Mrs. Davenant and me that he had thoughts of inventing a particular mill to grind old ladies young, as he was so prodigiously fond of their company. I suppose he thought we should bring *grist*. Was that the way to put people in *tune*? I asked him."—*Mrs. Thrale to Miss Burney*, January 4, 1781.

"'Goodness me,' said a Scotch Lady Somebody one day to Merlin, after wondering at his pedal tea-table,—'goodness me, Sir, and did you make that yourself?'"—*The Rev. T. Twining to Miss Burney*, July 10, 1786.

gusted, she bore neither with frailty nor folly—those two principal ingredients in human nature! She required, to obtain her favour, the union of virtue and abilities with elegance, which meeting but rarely, she was rarely disposed to be pleased; and disdaining to conceal either contempt or aversion, she inspired in return nothing but dread or resentment: making thus, by a want of that lenity which is the *milk of human kindness*, and the bond of society, enemies the most numerous and illiberal by those very talents which, more *meekly borne*, would have rendered her not merely admired, but adored!

In proportion, however, as she was thus at war with the world in general, the chosen few who were honoured with her favour, she loved with a zeal all her own; her heart, liberal, open, and but too daringly sincere, was fervent in affection, and enthusiastic in admiration; the friends who were dear to her, she was devoted to serve, she magnified their virtues till she thought them of a higher race of beings, she inflamed her generosity with ideas of what she owed to them, till her life seemed too small a sacrifice to be refused for their service.

Such was the love which already she felt for Cecilia; her countenance had struck, her manners had charmed her, her understanding was displayed by the quick intelligence of her eyes, and every action and every notion spoke her mind the seat of elegance. In secret she sometimes regretted that she was not higher born, but that regret always vanished when she saw and conversed with her.

Her own youth had been passed in all the severity of affliction; she had been married to Mr. Delvile by her relations, without any consultation of her heart or her will. Her strong mind disdained useless complaints, yet her discontent, however private, was deep. Ardent in her disposition, and naturally violent in her passions, her feelings were extremely acute, and to curb them by reason and principle had been the chief and hard study of her life. The effort had calmed, though it had not made her happy. To love Mr. Delvile she felt was impossible; proud without merit, and imperious without capacity, she saw with bitterness the inferiority of his faculties, and she found in his temper no qualities to endear or attract: yet she respected

his birth and his family, of which her own was a branch, and whatever was her misery from the connection, she steadily behaved to him with the strictest propriety.[1]

Her son, however, when she was blessed with his presence, had a power over her mind that mitigated all her sorrows, and almost lulled even her wishes to sleep: she rather idolised than loved him, yet her fondness flowed not from relationship, but from his worth and his character, his talents and his disposition. She saw in him, indeed, all her own virtues and excellencies, with a toleration for the imperfections of others to which she was wholly a stranger. Whatever was great or good she expected him to perform; occasion alone she thought wanting to manifest him the first of human beings.

Nor here was Mr. Delvile himself less sanguine in his hopes; his son was not only the first object of his affection, but the chief idol of his pride, and he did not merely cherish but reverence him as his successor, the only support of his ancient name and family, without whose life and health the whole race would be extinct. He consulted him in all his affairs, never mentioned him but with distinction, and expected the whole world to bow down before him.

Delvile in his behaviour to his father imitated the conduct of his mother, who opposed him in nothing when his pleasure was made known, but who forbore to enquire into his opinion except in cases of necessity. Their minds, indeed, were totally dissimilar; and Delvile well knew that if he submitted to his directions, he must demand such respect as the world would refuse with indignation, and scarcely speak to a man whose genealogy was not known to him.

But though duty and gratitude were the only ties that bound him to his father, he loved his mother not merely with filial affection, but with the purest esteem and highest reverence; he knew, too, that while without him her existence would be a burthen, her tenderness was no effusion

[1] "Upon my honour then, my dear, I have not said half of what my heart is full. The Delviles, since I wrote last, efface every thing else. When I read the lady's character in my own dressing-room, I catch myself looking at my mother's picture every moment; yours is so like her in many things."—*Mrs. Thrale to Miss Burney*, 1782.—*Diary*, p. 139, ii.

of weak partiality, but founded on the strongest assurances of his worth; and however to maternal indulgence its origin might be owing, the rectitude of his own conduct could alone save it from diminution.

Such was the house in which Cecilia was now settled, and with which she lived almost to the exclusion of the sight of any other; for though she had now been three weeks at the castle, she had only at church seen any family but the Delviles.

Nor did any thing in the course of that time occur to her, but the reception of a melancholy letter from Mrs. Harrel, filled with complaints of her retirement and misery; and another from Mr. Arnott, with an account of the funeral, the difficulties he had had to encounter with the creditors, who had even seized the dead body, and the numerous expenses in which he had been involved, by petitions he could not withstand, from the meaner and more clamorous of those whom his late brother-in-law had left unpaid. He concluded with a pathetic prayer for her happiness, and a declaration that his own was lost for ever, since now he was even deprived of her sight. Cecilia wrote an affectionate answer to Mrs. Harrel, promising, when fully at liberty, that she would herself fetch her to her own house in Suffolk: but she could only send her compliments to Mr. Arnott, though her compassion urged a kinder message; as she feared even a shadow of encouragement to so serious, yet hopeless a passion.

CHAPTER II.

A RATTLE.

AT this time the house was much enlivened by a visit from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who came to spend a month with Mrs. Delvile.

Cecilia had now but little leisure, for Lady Honoria would hardly rest a moment away from her; she insisted upon walking with her, sitting with her; working with her, and singing with her; whatever she did, she chose to do also;

wherever she went, she was bent upon accompanying her; and Mrs. Delvile, who wished her well, though she had no patience with her foibles, encouraged this intimacy from the hope it might do her service.

It was not, however, that Lady Honoria had conceived any regard for Cecilia; on the contrary, had she been told she should see her no more, she would have heard it with the same composure as if she had been told she should meet with her daily: she had no motive for pursuing her but that she had nothing else to do, and no fondness for her society but what resulted from aversion to solitude.

Lady Honoria had received a fashionable education, in which her proficiency had been equal to what fashion made requisite; she sung a little, played the harpsichord a little, painted a little, worked a little, and danced a great deal. She had quick parts and high spirits, though her mind was uncultivated, and she was totally void of judgment or discretion: she was careless of giving offence, and indifferent to all that was thought of her; the delight of her life was to create wonder by her rattle, and whether that wonder was to her advantage or discredit, she did not for a moment trouble herself to consider.

A character of so much levity with so little heart had no great chance of raising esteem or regard in Cecilia, who at almost any other period of her life would have been wearied of her importunate attendance; but at present, the unsettled state of her own mind made her glad to give it any employment, and the sprightliness of Lady Honoria served therefore to amuse her. Yet she could not forbear being hurt by finding that the behaviour of Delvile was so exactly the same to them both, that any common observer would with difficulty have pronounced which he preferred.

One morning about a week after her ladyship's arrival at the castle, she came running into Cecilia's room, saying she had very good news for her.

"A charming opening!" cried Cecilia, "pray tell it me."

"Why my Lord Derford is coming!"

"O what a melancholy dearth of incident," cried Cecilia, "if this is your best intelligence!"

"Why it's better than nothing: better than going to

sleep over a family-party; and I vow I have sometimes such difficulty to keep awake, that I am frightened to death lest I should be taken with a sudden nap, and affront them all. Now pray speak the truth without squeamishness, don't you find it very terrible?"

"No, I find nothing very terrible with Mrs. Delvile."

"O, I like Mrs. Delvile, too, of all things, for I believe she's the cleverest woman in the world; but then I know she does not like me, so there's no being very fond of her. Besides, really, if I admired her as much again, I should be dreadfully tired of seeing nothing else. She never stirs out, you know, and has no company at home, which is an extremely tiresome plan, for it only serves to make us all doubly sick of one another: though, you must know, it's one great reason why my father likes I should come; for he has some very old-fashioned notions, though I take a great deal of pains to make him get the better of them. But I am always excessively rejoiced when the visit has been paid, for I am obliged to come every year. I don't mean *now*, indeed, because your being here makes it vastly more tolerable."

"You do me much honour," said Cecilia, laughing.

"But really, when my Lord Derford comes, it can't possibly be quite so bad, for at least there will be something else to look at; and you must know my eyes tire extremely of always seeing the same objects. And we can ask him, too, for a little news, and that will put Mrs. Delvile in a passion, which will help to give us a little spirit: though I know we shall not get the smallest intelligence from him, for he knows nothing in the world that's going forward. And indeed, that's no great matter, for if he did, he would not know how to tell it, he's so excessively silly. However, I shall ask him all sort of things, for the less he can answer, the more it will plague him; and I like to plague a fool amazingly, because he can never plague one again. —Though, really, I ought to beg your pardon, for he is one of your admirers."

"O, pray make no stranger of me! you have my free consent to say whatever you please of him."

"I assure you, then, I like my old Lord Ernolf the best of the two, for he has a thousand times more sense than

his son, and upon my word I don't think he is much uglier. But I wonder vastly you would not marry him, for all that, for you might have done exactly what you pleased with him, which, altogether, would have been no inconvenient circumstance."

"When I want a pupil," answered Cecilia, "I shall think that an admirable recommendation: but were I to marry, I would rather find a tutor, of the two."

"I am sure I should not," cried Lady Honoria, carelessly, "for one has enough to do with tutors before hand, and the best thing I know of marrying is to get rid of them. I fancy you think so too, only it's a pretty speech to make. Oh, how my sister Euphrasia would adore you!—Pray are you always as grave as you are now?"

"No,—yes,—indeed I hardly know."

"I fancy it's this dismal place that hurts your spirits. I remember when I saw you in St. James's-square I thought you very lively. But really these thick walls are enough to inspire the vapours if one never had them before."

"I don't think they have had a very bad effect upon your ladyship!"

"O yes they have; if Euphrasia was here she would hardly know me. And the extreme want of taste and entertainment in all the family is quite melancholy: for even if by chance one has the good fortune to hear any intelligence, Mrs. Delvile will hardly let it be repeated, for fear it should happen to be untrue, as if that could possibly signify! I am sure I had as lieve the things were false as not, for they tell as well the one way as the other, if she would but have patience to hear them. But she's extremely severe, you know, as almost all those very clever women are; so that she keeps a kind of restraint upon me whether I will or no. However, that's nothing compared to her *caro sposo*, for he is utterly insufferable; so solemn, and so dull! so stately and so tiresome! Mortimer, too, gets worse and worse. O 'tis a sad tribe! I dare say he will soon grow quite as horrible as his father. Don't you think so?"

"Why indeed,—no,—I don't think there's much resemblance," said Cecilia, with some hesitation.

"He is the most altered creature," continued her lady-

ship, "I ever saw in my life. Once I thought him the most agreeable young man in the world: but, if you observe, that's all over now, and he is getting just as stupid and dismal as the rest of them. I wish you had been here last summer; I assure you, you would quite have fallen in love with him."

"Should I?" said Cecilia, with a conscious smile.

"Yes, for he was quite delightful; all spirit and gaiety; but now, if it was not for you, I really think I should pretend to lose my way, and instead of going over that old draw-bridge, throw myself into the moat. I wish Euphrasia was here. It's just the right place for her. She'll fancy herself in a monastery as soon as she comes, and nothing will make her half so happy, for she is always wishing to be a nun, poor little simpleton."

"Is there any chance that Lady Euphrasia may come?"

"O no, she can't at present, because it would not be proper: but I mean if, ever she is married to Mortimer—"

"Married to him!" repeated Cecilia, in the utmost consternation.

"I believe, my dear," cried Honoria, looking at her very archly, "you intend to be married to him yourself?"

"Me? no, indeed!"

"You look very guilty, though," cried she, laughing; "and indeed when you came hither, everybody said that the whole affair was arranged."

"For shame, Lady Honoria!" said Cecilia, again changing colour, "I am sure this must be your own fancy, —invention,—"

"No, I assure you; I heard it at several places; and everybody said how charmingly your fortune would build up all these old fortifications: but some people said they knew Mr. Harrel had sold you to Mr. Marriot, and that if you married Mortimer, there would be a law-suit that would take away half your estate; and others said you had promised your hand to Sir Robert Floyer, and repented when you heard of his mortgages, and he gave it out every where that he would fight any man that pretended to you; and then again some said that you were all the time privately married to Mr. Arnott, but did not dare own it, because he was so afraid of fighting with Sir Robert."

"O, Lady Honoria!" cried Cecilia, half laughing, "what wild inventions are these! and all, I hope, your own?"

"No, indeed, they were current over the whole town. But don't take any notice of what I told you about Euphrasia, for perhaps it may never happen."

"Perhaps," said Cecilia, reviving by believing it all fiction, "it has never been in agitation?"

"O yes; it is negociating at this very moment, I believe, among the higher powers; only Mr. Delvile does not yet know whether Euphrasia has fortune enough for what he wants."

"Ah," thought Cecilia, "how do I rejoice that my independent situation exempts me from being disposed of for life, by thus being set up to sale!"

"They thought of me, once, for Mortimer," continued Lady Honoria, "but I'm vastly glad that's over, for I never should have survived being shut up in this place; it's much fitter for Euphrasia. To tell you the truth, I believe they could not make out money enough; but Euphrasia has a fortune of her own, besides what we shall have together, for Grandmama left her every thing that was in her own power."

"Is Lady Euphrasia your elder sister?"

"O no, poor little thing, she's two years younger. Grandmama brought her up, and she has seen nothing at all of the world, for she has never been presented yet, so she is not *come out*, you know: but she's to come out next year. However, she once saw Mortimer, but she did not like him at all."

"Not like him!" cried Cecilia, greatly surprised.

"No, she thought him too gay,—Oh dear, I wish she could see him now! I am sure I hope she would find him sad enough! she is the most formal little grave thing you ever beheld; she'll preach to you sometimes for half an hour together. Grandmama taught her nothing in the world but to say her prayers, so that almost every other word you say she thinks is quite wicked."

The conversation was now interrupted by their separating to dress for dinner. It left Cecilia in much perplexity; she knew not what wholly to credit, or wholly to disbelieve; but her chief concern arose from the unfortunate change

of countenance which Lady Honoria had been so quick in observing.

The next time she was alone with Mrs. Delvile, "Miss Beverley," she said, "has your little rattling tormenter acquainted you who is coming?"

"Lord Derford, do you mean, ma'am?"

"Yes, with his father; shall you dislike to see him?"

"Not if, as I hope, they come merely to wait upon you and Mr. Delvile."

"Mr. Delvile and myself," answered she, smiling, "will certainly have the honour of *receiving* them."

"Lord Ernolf," said Cecilia, "can never suppose his visit will make any change in me; I have been very explicit with him, and he seemed equally rational and well bred in forbearing any importunity upon the subject."

"It has, however, been much believed in town," said Mrs. Delvile, "that you were strangely shackled by Mr. Harrel, and therefore his lordship may probably hope that a change in your situation may be followed by a change in his favour."

"I shall be sorry if he does," said Cecilia, "for he will then find himself much deceived."

"You are right, very right," cried Mrs. Delvile, "to be difficult in your choice, and to take time for looking around you before you make any. I have forborn all questions upon this subject, lest you should find any reluctance in answering them; but I am now too deeply interested in your welfare to be contented in total ignorance of your designs: will you, then, suffer me to make a few enquiries?"

Cecilia gave a ready, but blushing assent.

"Tell me, then, of the many admirers who have graced your train, which there is you have distinguished with any intention of future preference?"

"Not one, madam!"

"And, out of so many, is there not one that, hereafter, you mean to distinguish?"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, shaking her head, "many as they may seem, I have little reason to be proud of them; there is one only who, had my fortune been smaller, would, I believe, ever have thought of me; and there is *one* only, who, were it now diminished, would ever think of me more."

"This sincerity," cried Mrs. Delvile, "is just what I expected from you. There is, then, *one?*"

"I believe there is,—and the worthy Mr. Arnott is the man; I am much indeed deceived, if his partiality for me is not truly disinterested, and I almost wish——"

"What, my love?"

"That I could return it more gratefully!"

"And do you not?"

"No!—I cannot! I esteem him, I have the truest regard for his character, and were I now, by any fatal necessity, compelled to belong to any one of those who have been pleased to address me, I should not hesitate a moment in showing him my gratitude; but yet, for some time at least, such a proof of it would render me very miserable."

"You may perhaps think so now," returned Mrs. Delvile; "but with sentiments so strongly in his favour, you will probably be led hereafter to pity——and accept him."

"No, indeed, madam;—I pretend not, I own, to open my whole heart to you;—I know not that you would have patience for so uninteresting a detail; but though there are some things I venture not to mention, there is nothing, believe me, in which I will deceive you."

"I *do* believe you," cried Mrs. Delvile, embracing her; "and the more readily because, not merely among your avowed admirers, but among the whole race of men, I scarce know one to whom I should think you worthily consigned!"

"Ah!" thought Cecilia, "that *scarce!* who may it mean to except?"

"To show you," she continued, "that I will deserve your confidence in future, I will refrain from distressing you by any further questions at present: you will not, I think, act materially without consulting me, and for your thoughts—it were tyranny, not friendship, to investigate them more narrowly."

Cecilia's gratitude for this delicacy, would instantly have induced her to tell every secret of her soul, had she not apprehended such a confession would have seemed soliciting her interest and assistance, in the only affair in which she would have disdained ever to receive them.

She thanked her, therefore, for her kindness, and the

conversation was dropt; she much wished to have known whether these enquiries sprung simply from friendly curiosity, or whether she was desirous from any nearer motive to be satisfied with respect to her freedom or engagements. This, however, she had no method of discovering, and was therefore compelled to wait quietly till time should make it clear.

CHAPTER III.

A STORM.

ONE evening about this time, which was the latter end of July, Lady Honoria and Cecilia deferred walking out till very late, and then found it so pleasant, that they had strolled into the park two miles from the house, when they were met by young Delvile; who, however, only reminded them how far they had to return, and walked on.

"He grows quite intolerable!" cried Lady Honoria, when he was gone; "it's really a melancholy thing to see a young man behave so like an old monk. I dare say in another week he won't take off his hat to us; and, in about a fortnight, I suppose he'll shut himself up in one of those little round towers, and shave his head, and live upon roots, and howl if anybody comes near him. I really half wonder he does not think it too dissipated to let Fidel run after him so. A thousand to one but he shoots him some day for giving a sudden bark when he's in one of these gloomy fits. Something, however, must certainly be the matter with him. Perhaps he is in love."

"Can nothing be the matter with him but that?" cried Cecilia.

"Nay, I don't know; but I am sure if he is, his mistress has not much occasion to be jealous of you or me, for never, I think, were two poor damsels so neglected!"

The utmost art of malice could not have furnished a speech more truly mortifying to Cecilia than this thoughtless and accidental sally of Lady Honoria's: particularly, however, upon her guard, from the raillery she had already

endured, she answered, with apparent indifference, "He is meditating, perhaps, upon Lady Euphrasia."

"O no," cried Lady Honoria, "for he did not take any notice of her when he saw her; I am sure if he marries her, it will only be because he cannot help it."

"Poor Lady Euphrasia!"

"O no, not at all; he'll make her two or three fine speeches, and then she'll be perfectly contented: especially if he looks as dismally at her as he does at us! and that probably he will do the more readily for not liking to look at her at all. But she's such a romantic little thing, she'll never suspect him."

Here they were somewhat alarmed by a sudden darkness in the air, which was presently succeeded by a thunder-storm; they instantly turned back, and began running home, when a violent shower of rain obliged them to take shelter under a large tree; where in two minutes they were joined by Delvile, who came to offer his assistance in hurrying them home; and finding the thunder and lightning continue, begged them to move on, in defiance of the rain, as their present situation exposed them to more danger than a wet hat and cloak, which might be changed in a moment.

Cecilia readily assented; but Lady Honoria, extremely frightened, protested she would not stir till the storm was over. It was in vain he represented her mistake in supposing herself in a place of security; she clung to the tree, screamed at every flash of lightning, and all her gay spirits were lost in her apprehensions.

Delvile then earnestly proposed to Cecilia conducting her home by herself, and returning again to Lady Honoria; but she thought it wrong to quit her companion, and hardly right to accept his assistance separately. They waited, therefore, some time all together; but the storm increasing with great violence, the thunder growing louder, and the lightning becoming stronger, Delvile grew impatient even to anger at Lady Honoria's resistance, and warmly expostulated upon its folly and danger. But this was no season for lessons in philosophy; prejudices she had never been taught to surmount made her think herself in a place of safety, and she was now too much terrified to give argument fair play.

Finding her thus impracticable, Delvile eagerly said to Cecilia, "Come then, Miss Beverley, let us wait no longer; I will see you home, and then return to Lady Honoria."

"By no means," cried she, "my life is not more precious than either of yours, and therefore it may run the same risk."

"It is more precious," cried he with vehemence, "than the air I breathe!" and seizing her hand, he drew it under his arm, and, without waiting her consent, almost forced her away with him, saying as they ran, "How could a thousand Lady Honoria's recompense the world for the loss of one Miss Beverley? we may, indeed, find many thousand such as Lady Honoria, but such as Miss Beverley —where shall we ever find another?"

Cecilia surprised, yet gratified, could not speak, for the speed with which they ran almost took away her breath; and before they were near home, slackening her pace, and panting, she confessed her strength was exhausted, and that she could go so fast no further.

"Let us then stop and rest," cried he; "but why will you not lean upon me? surely this is no time for scruples, and for idle and unnecessary scruples, Miss Beverley can never find a time."

Cecilia then, urged equally by shame at his speech and by weakness from fatigue, leant upon his arm; but she soon repented her condescension; for Delvile, with an emotion he seemed to find wholly irrepressible, passionately exclaimed, "sweet, lovely burthen! O! why not thus for ever!"

The strength of Cecilia was now instantly restored, and she hastily withdrew from his hold; he suffered her to disengage herself, and said in a faultering voice, "pardon me, Cecilia!—madam!—Miss Beverley, I mean!——"

Cecilia, without making any answer, walked on by herself, as quick a pace as she was able; and Delvile, not venturing to oppose her, silently followed.

They had gone but a few steps, before there came a violent shower of hail; and the wind, which was very high, being immediately in their faces, Cecilia was so pelted and incommoded, that she was frequently obliged to stop, in defiance of her utmost efforts to force herself forward.

Delvile then approaching her, proposed that she should again stand under a tree, as the thunder and lightning for the present seemed over, and wait there till the fury of the hail was past: and Cecilia, though never before so little disposed to oblige him, was so much distressed by the violence of the wind and hail, that she was forced to comply.

Every instant now seemed an age; yet neither hail nor wind abated: meantime they were both silent, and both, though with different feelings, equally comfortless.

Delvile, however, who took care to place himself on the side whence the wind blew hardest, perceived, in spite of his endeavours to save her, some hail-stones lodged upon her thin summer cloak: he then took off his own hat, and, though he ventured not to let it touch her, held it in such a manner as to shelter her better.

Cecilia now could no longer be either silent or unmoved, but turning to him with much emotion, said, "Why will you do this, Mr. Delvile?"

"What would I *not* do," answered he, "to obtain forgiveness from Miss Beverley?"

"Well, well,—pray put on your hat."

"Do you command it?"

"No, certainly!—but I wish it."

"Ah!" cried he, instantly putting it on, "whose are the commands that would have half the weight with your wishes?"

And then, after another pause, he added, "do you forgive me?"

Cecilia, ashamed of the cause of their dissention, and softened by the seriousness of his manner, answered very readily, "yes, yes,—why will you make me remember such nonsense?"

"All sweetness," cried he, warmly, and snatching her hand, "is Miss Beverley!—O that I had power—that it were not utterly impossible—that the cruelty of my situation——"

"I find," cried she, greatly agitated, and forcibly drawing away her hand, "you will teach me, for another time, the folly of fearing bad weather!"

And she hurried from beneath the tree; and Delvile perceiving one of the servants approach with an umbrella,

went forward to take it from him, and directed him to hasten instantly to Lady Honoria.

Then returning to Cecilia, he would have held it over her head, but with an air of displeasure, she took it into her own hand.

"Will you not let me carry it for you?" he cried.

"No, sir, there is not any occasion."

They then proceeded silently on.

The storm was now soon over; but it grew very dark, and as they had quitted the path while they ran, in order to get home by a shorter cut, the walk was so bad from the height of the grass, and the unevenness of the ground, that Cecilia had the utmost difficulty to make her way; yet she resolutely refused any assistance from Delvile, who walked anxiously by her side, and seemed equally fearful upon his own account and upon hers, to trust himself with being importunate.

At length they came to a place which Cecilia in vain tried to pass; Delvile then grew more urgent to help her; firm, however, in declining all aid, she preferred going a considerable way round to another part of the park which led to the house. Delvile, angry as well as mortified, proposed to assist her no more, but followed without saying a word.

Cecilia, though she felt not all the resentment she displayed, still thought it necessary to support it, as she was much provoked with the perpetual inconsistency of his behaviour, and deemed it wholly improper to suffer, without discouragement, occasional sallies of tenderness from one who, in his general conduct, behaved with the most scrupulous reserve.

They now arrived at the castle; but entering by a back way, came to a small and narrow passage which obstructed the entrance of the umbrella: Delvile once more, and almost involuntarily, offered to help her; but, letting down the spring, she coldly said she had no further use for it.

He then went forward to open a small gate which led by another long passage into the hall: but hearing the servants advance, he held it for an instant in his hand, while, in a tone of voice the most dejected, he said "I am grieved to find you thus offended; but were it possible you could

know half the wretchedness of my heart, the generosity of your own would make you regret this severity!" and then, opening the gate, he bowed, and went another way.

Cecilia was now in the midst of servants; but so much shocked and astonished by the unexpected speech of Delvile, which instantly changed all her anger into sorrow, that she scarce knew what they said to her, nor what she replied; though they all with one voice enquired what was become of Lady Honoria, and which way they should run to seek her.

Mrs. Delvile then came also, and she was obliged to recollect herself. She immediately proposed her going to bed, and drinking white-wine whey to prevent taking cold: cold, indeed, she feared not; yet she agreed to the proposal, for she was confounded and dismayed by what had passed, and utterly unable to hold any conversation.

Her perplexity and distress were, however, all attributed to fatigue and fright; and Mrs. Delvile, having assisted in hurrying her to bed, went to perform the same office for Lady Honoria, who arrived at that time.

Left at length by herself, she revolved in her mind the adventure of the evening, and the whole behaviour of Delvile since first she was acquainted with him. That he loved her with tenderness, with fondness loved her, seemed no longer to admit of any doubt, for however distant and cold he appeared, when acting with circumspection and design, the moment he was off his guard from surprise, terror, accident of any sort, the moment that he was betrayed into acting from nature and inclination, he was constantly certain to discover a regard the most animating and flattering.

This regard, however, was not more evident than his desire to conceal and to conquer it, he seemed to dread even her sight, and to have imposed upon himself the most rigid forbearance of all conversation or intercourse with her.

Whence could this arise? what strange and unfathomable cause could render necessary a conduct so mysterious? he knew not, indeed, that she herself wished it changed, but he could not be ignorant that his chance with almost any woman would at least be worth trying.

Was the obstacle which thus discouraged him the condition imposed by her uncle's will of giving her own name to the man she married? this she herself thought was an un-

pleasant circumstance, but yet so common for an heiress, that it could hardly out-weigh the many advantages of such a connection.

Henrietta again occurred to her; the letter she had seen in her hands was still unexplained: yet her entire conviction that Henrietta was not loved by him, joined to a certainty that affection alone could ever make him think of her, lessened upon this subject her suspicions every moment.

Lady Euphrasia Pemberton, at last, rested most upon her mind, and she thought it probable some actual treaty was negotiating with the Duke of Derwent.

Mrs. Delvile she had every reason to believe was her friend, though she was scrupulously delicate in avoiding either raillery or observation upon the subject of her son, whom she rarely mentioned, and never but upon occasions in which Cecilia could have no possible interest.

The father, therefore, notwithstanding all Mr. Monckton had represented to the contrary, appeared to be the real obstacle; his pride might readily object to her birth, which though not contemptible, was merely decent, and which, if traced beyond her grandfather, lost all title even to that epithet.

"If this, however," she cried, "is at last his situation, how much have I been to blame in censuring his conduct! for while to me he has appeared capricious, he has, in fact, acted wholly from necessity: if his father insists upon his forming another connection, has he not been honourable, prudent and just, in flying an object that made him think of disobedience, and endeavouring to keep her ignorant of a partiality it is his duty to curb?"

All, therefore, that remained for her to do or to resolve, was to guard her own secret with more assiduous care than ever, and since she found that their union was by himself thought impossible, to keep from his knowledge that the regret was not all his own.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERY.

FOR two days, in consequence of violent colds caught during the storm, Lady Honoria Pemberton and Cecilia were confined to their rooms. Cecilia, glad by solitude and reflection to compose her spirits and settle her plan of conduct, would willingly have still prolonged her retirement, but the abatement of her cold affording her no pretence, she was obliged on the third day to make her appearance.

Lady Honoria, though less recovered, as she had been more a sufferer, was impatient of any restraint, and would take no denial to quitting her room at the same time; at dinner, therefore, all the family met as usual.

Mr. Delvile, with his accustomed solemnity of civility, made various enquiries and congratulations upon their danger and their security, carefully in both, addressing himself first to Lady Honoria, and then with more stateliness in his kindness, to Cecilia. His lady, who had frequently visited them both, had nothing new to hear.

Delvile did not come in till they were all seated, when, hastily saying he was glad to see both the ladies so well again, he instantly employed himself in carving, with the agitation of a man who feared trusting himself to sit idle.

Little, however, as he said, Cecilia was much struck by the melancholy tone of his voice, and the moment she raised her eyes, she observed that his countenance was equally sad.

"Mortimer," cried Mr. Delvile, "I am sure you are not well; I cannot imagine why you will not have some advice."

"Were I to send for a physician, sir," cried Delvile, with affected cheerfulness, "he would find it much more difficult to imagine what advice to give me."

"Permit me, however, Mr. Mortimer," cried Lady Honoria, "to return you my humble thanks for the honour

of your assistance in the thunder storm! I am afraid you made yourself ill by attending *me!*"

"Your ladyship," returned Delvile, colouring very high, yet pretending to laugh; "made so great a coward of me, that I ran away from shame at my own inferiority of courage."

"Were you, then, with Lady Honoria during the storm?" cried Mrs. Delvile.

"No, madam!" cried Lady Honoria very quick; "but he was so good as to *leave* me during the storm."

"Mortimer," said Mr. Delvile, "is this possible?"

"O, Lady Honoria was such a heroine," answered Delvile, "that she wholly disdained receiving any assistance; her valour was so much more undaunted than mine, that she ventured to brave the lightning under an oak tree!"

"Now, dear Mrs. Delvile," exclaimed Lady Honoria, "think what a simpleton he would have made of me! he wanted to persuade me that in the open air I should be less exposed to danger than under the shelter of a thick tree!"

"Lady Honoria," replied Mrs. Delvile, with a sarcastic smile, "the next tale of scandal you oblige me to hear, I will insist for your punishment that you shall read one of Mr. Newbury's[1] little books! there are twenty of them that will explain this matter to you, and such reading will at least employ your time as usefully as such tales!"

"Well, ma'am," said Lady Honoria, "I don't know

[1] At No. 65, "the (north-west) corner of St. Paul's Churchyard," and of Ludgate Hill, lived John Newbery, who published Goldsmith's "Traveller," "Vicar of Wakefield," and "Citizen of the World." Dr. Primrose, the Vicar of Wakefield, is supplied with money by a traveller, who stopped to take a cursory refreshment at the little ale house where the vicar had been ill. "This person was no other than the philanthropic bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, who has written so many little books for children; he called himself their friend; but he was the friend of all mankind. He was no sooner alighted but he was in haste to be gone; for he was ever on business of the utmost importance; and was at that time actually compiling materials for the history of one Mr. Thomas Trip. I immediately recollected this good-natured man's red pimpled face—for he had published for me against the Deuterogamists of the age—and from him I borrowed a few pieces, to be paid at my return."—*The Vicar of Wakefield.*

The "red pimpled face" is probably a pleasantry, the reverse of truth, and not an unkind mention of fact.

whether you are laughing at me or not, but really I concluded Mr. Mortimer only chose to amuse himself in a tête à tête with Miss Beverley."

"He was not with Miss Beverley," cried Mrs. Delvile, with quickness; "she was alone,—I saw her myself the moment she came in."

"Yes, ma'am,—but not then,—he was gone;"—said Cecilia, endeavouring, but not very successfully, to speak with composure.

"I had the honour," cried Delvile, making, with equal success, the same attempt, "to wait upon Miss Beverley to the little gate; and I was then returning to Lady Honoria when I met her ladyship just coming in."

"Very extraordinary, Mortimer," said Mr. Delvile, staring, "to attend Lady Honoria the last!"

"Don't be angry in earnest, sir," cried Lady Honoria, gaily, "for I did not mean to turn tell-tale."

Here the subject was dropt, greatly to the joy both of Delvile and Cecilia, who mutually exerted themselves in talking upon what next was started, in order to prevent its being recurred to again.

That fear, however, over, Delvile said little more; sadness hung heavily on his mind; he was absent, disturbed, uneasy; yet he endeavoured no longer to avoid Cecilia; on the contrary, when she arose to quit the room, he looked evidently disappointed.

The ladies colds kept them at home all the evening, and Delvile, for the first time since their arrival at the castle, joined them at tea: nor when it was over, did he as usual retire; he loitered, pretended to be caught by a new pamphlet, and looked as anxiously eager to speak with Cecilia, as he had hitherto appeared to shun her.

With new emotion and fresh distress Cecilia perceived this change; what he might have to say she could not conjecture, but all that fore-ran his communication convinced her it was nothing she could wish; and much as she had desired some explanation of his designs, when the long expected moment seemed arriving, prognostications the most cruel of the event repressed her impatience, and deadened her curiosity. She earnestly lamented her unfortunate residence in his house, where the adoration of every in-

habitant, from his father to the lowest servant, had impressed her with the strongest belief of his general worthiness, and greatly, though unperceptibly, encreased her regard for him, since she had now not a doubt remaining but that some cruel, some fatal, obstacle prohibited their union.

To collect fortitude to hear it with composure, was now her whole study; but though, when alone, she thought any discovery preferable to suspense, all her courage failed her when Delvile appeared, and if she could not detain Lady Honoria, she involuntarily followed her.

Thus passed four or five days, during which the health of Delvile seemed to suffer with his mind; and though he refused to acknowledge he was ill, it was evident to every body that he was far from well.

Mr. Delvile frequently urged him to consent to have some advice; but he always revived, though with forced and transitory spirits, at the mention of a physician, and the proposal ended in nothing.

Mrs. Delvile, too, at length grew alarmed; her enquiries were more penetrating and pointed, but they were not more successful; every attack of this sort was followed by immediate gaiety, which, however constrained, served, for the time, to change the subject. Mrs. Delvile, however, was not soon to be deceived; she watched her son incessantly, and seemed to feel an inquietude scarce less than his own.

Cecilia's distress was now augmented every moment, and the difficulty to conceal it grew every hour more painful; she felt herself the cause of the dejection of the son, and that thought made her feel guilty in the presence of the mother; the explanation she expected threatened her with new misery, and the courage to endure it she tried in vain to acquire; her heart was most cruelly oppressed, apprehension and suspense never left it for an instant; rest abandoned her at night, and cheerfulness by day.

At this time the two lords, Ernolf and Derford, arrived; and Cecilia, who at first had lamented their design, now rejoiced in their presence, since they divided the attention of Mrs. Delvile, which she began to fear was

not wholly directed to her son, and since they saved her from having the whole force of Lady Honoria's high spirits and gay rattle to herself.

Their immediate observations upon the ill looks of Delvile, startled both Cecilia and the mother even more than their own fears, which they had hoped were rather the result of apprehension than of reason. Cecilia now severely reproached herself with having deferred the conference he was evidently seeking, not doubting but she had contributed to his indisposition, by denying him the relief he might expect from concluding the affair.

Melancholy as was this idea, it was yet a motive to overpower her reluctance, and determine her no longer to shun what it seemed necessary to endure.

Deep reasoners, however, when they are also nice casuists, frequently resolve with a tardiness which renders their resolutions of no effect: this was the case with Cecilia; the same morning that she came down stairs prepared to meet with firmness the blow which she believed awaited her, Delvile, who, since the arrival of the two lords, had always appeared at the general breakfast, acknowledged, in answer to his mother's earnest enquiries, that he had a cold and head-ache: and had he, at the same time, acknowledged a pleurisy and fever, the alarm instantly spread in the family could not have been greater. Mr. Delvile, furiously ringing the bell, ordered a man and horse to go that moment to Dr. Lyster, the physician to the family, and not to return without him if he was himself alive; and Mrs. Delvile, not less distressed, though more quiet, fixed her eyes upon her son, with an expression of anxiety that showed her whole happiness was bound in his recovery.

Delvile endeavoured to laugh away their fears, assuring them he should be well the next day, and representing, in ridiculous terms, the perplexity of Dr. Lyster to contrive some prescription for him.

Cecilia's behaviour, guided by prudence and modesty, was steady and composed; she believed his illness and his uneasiness were the same, and she hoped the resolution she had taken would bring relief to them both: while the terrors of Mr. and Mrs. Delvile seemed so greatly beyond

the occasion, that her own were rather lessened than encreased by them.

Dr. Lyster soon arrived; he was a humane and excellent physician, and a man of sound judgment.

Delvile, gaily shaking hands with him, said, "I believe, Dr. Lyster, you little expected to meet a patient, who, were he as skilful, would be as able to do business as yourself."

"What, with such a hand as this?" cried the Doctor; "come, come, you must not teach me my own profession. When I attend a patient, I come to tell how he is myself, not to be told."

"He is, then, ill!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "O, Mortimer, why have you thus deceived us!"

"What is his disorder?" cried Mr. Delvile; "let us call in more help; who shall we send for, Doctor?"

And again he rang the bell.

"What now?" said Dr. Lyster, coolly; "must a man be dying if he is not in perfect health? We want nobody else; I hope I can prescribe for a cold without demanding a consultation."

"But are you sure it is merely a cold?" cried Mr. Delvile; "may not some dreadful malady——"

"Pray, sir, have patience," interrupted the Doctor; "Mr. Mortimer and I will have some discourse together presently; meantime, let us all sit down, and behave like Christians: I never talk of my art before company. 'Tis hard you won't let me be a gentleman at large for two minutes."

Lady Honoria and Cecilia would then have risen, but neither Dr. Lyster nor Delvile would permit them to go; and a conversation tolerably lively took place, after which, the party in general separating, the Doctor accompanied Delvile to his own apartment.

Cecilia then went up stairs, where she most impatiently waited some intelligence: none, however, arriving, in about half an hour she returned to the parlour; she found it empty, but was soon joined by Lady Honoria and Lord Ernolf.

Lady Honoria, happy in having something going forward, and not much concerning herself whether it were

good or evil, was as eager to communicate what she had gathered, as Cecilia was to hear it.

"Well, my dear," she cried, "so I don't find at last but that all this prodigious illness will be laid to your account."

"To my account?" cried Cecilia, "how is that possible?"

"Why this tender chicken caught cold in the storm last week, and not being put to bed by its mama, and nursed with white-wine whey, the poor thing has got a fever."

"He is a fine young man," said Lord Ernolf; "I should be sorry any harm happened to him."

"He *was* a fine young man, my Lord," cried Lady Honoria, "but he is grown intolerably stupid lately; however, it's all the fault of his father and mother. Was ever anything half so ridiculous as their behaviour this morning? it was with the utmost difficulty I forbore laughing in their faces: and really, I believe, if I was to meet with such an unfortunate accident with Mr. Delvile, it would turn him to marble at once! indeed he is little better now, but such an affront as that would never let him move from the spot where he received it."

"I forgive him, however," returned Lord Ernolf, "for his anxiety about his son, since he is the last of so ancient a family."

"That is his great misfortune, my Lord," answered Lady Honoria, "because it is the very reason they make such a puppet of him. If there were but a few more little masters to dandle and fondle, I'll answer for it this precious Mortimer would soon be left to himself: and then, really, I believe he would be a good, tolerable sort of young man. Don't you think he would, Miss Beverley?"

"O yes!" said Cecilia, "I believe—I think so!"

"Nay, nay, I did not ask if you thought him tolerable *now*, so no need to be frightened."

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of Dr Lyster.

"Well, sir," cried Lady Honoria, "and when am I to go into mourning for my cousin Mortimer?"

"Why very soon," answered he, "unless you take better care of him. He has confessed to me that after being out

in the storm last Wednesday, he sat in his wet clothes all the evening."

"Dear!" cried Lady Honoria, "and what would that do to him? I have no notion of a man's always wanting a cambric handkerchief about his throat."

"Perhaps your ladyship had rather make him apply it to his eyes?" cried the doctor: "however, sitting inactive in wet clothes would destroy a stouter man than Mr. Delvile; but he *forgot* it, he says! which of you two young ladies could not have given as good reason?"

"Your most obedient," said Lady Honoria; "and why should not a lady give as good a reason as a gentleman?"

"I don't know," answered he, drily, "but from want of practice, I believe."

"O, worse and worse!" cried Lady Honoria; "you shall never be my physician; if I was to be attended by you, you'd make me sick instead of well."

"All the better," answered he, "for then I must have the honour of attending you till I made you well instead of sick." And with a good-humoured smile, he left them; and Lord Derford, at the same time, coming into the room, Cecilia contrived to stroll out into the park.

The account to which she had been listening redoubled her uneasiness; she was conscious that whatever was the indisposition of Delvile, and whether it was mental or bodily, she was herself its occasion: through her he had been negligent, she had rendered him forgetful, and in consulting her own fears in preference to his peace, she had avoided an explanation, though he had vigilantly sought one. *She knew not*, he told her, *half the wretchedness of his heart*—"Alas!" thought she, "he little conjectures the state of mine!"

Lady Honoria suffered her not to be long alone; in about half an hour she ran after her, gaily calling out, "O, Miss Beverley, you have lost the delightfullest diversion in the world! I have just had the most ridiculous scene with my Lord Derford that you ever heard in your life! I asked him what put it in his head to be in love with you, —and he had the simplicity to answer, quite seriously, his father!"

"He was very right," said Cecilia, "if the desire of

uniting two estates is to be denominated being in love; for that, most certainly, was put into his head by his father."

"O, but you have not heard half. I told him, then, that, as a friend, in confidence I must acquaint him, I believed you intended to marry Mortimer——"

"Good heaven, Lady Honoria!"

"O, you shall hear the reason; because, as I assured him, it was proper he should immediately call him to account."

"Are you mad, Lady Honoria?"

"For you know," said I, "Miss Beverley has had one duel fought for her already, and a lady who has once had that compliment paid her, always expects it from every new admirer; and I really believe your not observing that form, is the true cause of her coldness to you."

"Is it possible you can have talked so wildly?"

"Yes, and what is much better, he believed every word I said!"

"Much better?—No, indeed, it is much worse! and if, in fact, he is so uncommonly weak, I shall really be but little indebted to your ladyship for giving him such notions."

"O, I would not but have done it for the world! for I never laughed so immoderately in my life. He began assuring me he was not afraid, for he said he had practised fencing more than any thing: so I made him promise to send a challenge to Mortimer as soon as he is well enough to come down again: for Dr. Lyster has ordered him to keep his room."

Cecilia, smothering her concern for this last piece of intelligence by pretending to feel it merely for the former, expostulated with Lady Honoria upon so mischievous a frolic, and earnestly entreated her to go back and contradict it all.

"No, no, not for the world!" cried she; "he has not the least spirit, and I dare say he would not fight to save the whole nation from destruction; but I'll make him believe that it's necessary, in order to give him something to think of, for really his poor head is so vacant, that I am sure if one might but play upon it with sticks, it would sound just like a drum."

Cecilia, finding it vain to combat with her fantasies, was at length obliged to submit.

The rest of the day she passed very unpleasantly; Delvile appeared not; his father was restless and disturbed, and his mother, though attentive to her guests, and for their sakes rallying her spirits, was visibly ill disposed to think or to talk but of her son.

One diversion, however, Cecilia found for herself: Delvile had a favourite spaniel, which, when he walked, followed him, and when he rode, ran by his horse; this dog, who was not admitted into the house, she now took under her own care; and spent almost the whole day out of doors, chiefly for the satisfaction of making him her companion.

The next morning, when Dr. Lyster came again, she kept in the way, in order to hear his opinion; and was sitting with Lady Honoria in the parlour, when he entered it to write a prescription.

Mrs. Delvile, in a few moments, followed him, and with a face and voice of the tenderest maternal apprehensions, said "Doctor, one thing entrust me with immediately; I can neither bear imposition nor suspense;—you know what I would say!—tell me if I have anything to fear, that my preparations may be adequate!"

"Nothing, I believe, in the world."

"You believe!" repeated Mrs. Delvile, starting; "Oh, doctor!"

"Why you would not have me say I am *certain*, would you? these are no times for popery and infallibility; how- I assure you I think him perfectly safe. He has done ish and idle trick, but no man is wise always. We get rid of his fever, and then if his cold remains, with ough, he may make a little excursion to Bristol."

Bristol! nay then,—I understand you too well!"

you don't understand me at all; I don't send istol because he is in a bad way, but merely nean to put him in a good one."

n, then, go immediately; why should he encrease by waiting a moment? I will order—"

hold! I know what to order myself! 'Tis a strange ople will always teach me my own duty! why should

I make a man travel such weather as this in a fever? do you think I want to confine him in a madhouse, or be confined in one myself?"

"Certainly you know best—but still, if there is any danger—"

"No, no, there is not! only we don't choose there should be any. And how will he entertain himself better than by going to Bristol? I send him merely on a jaunt of pleasure; and I am sure he will be safer there than shut up in a house with two such young ladies as these."

And then he made off. Mrs. Delvile, too anxious for conversation, left the room, and Cecilia, too conscious for silence, forced herself into discourse with Lady Honoria.

Three days she passed in this uncertainty what she had to expect; blaming those fears which had deferred an explanation, and tormented by Lady Honoria, whose raillery and levity now grew very unseasonable. Fidel, the favourite spaniel, was almost her only consolation, and she pleased herself not inconsiderably by making a friend of the faithful animal.

CHAPTER V.

AN ANECDOTE.

ON the fourth day the house wore a better aspect; Delvile's fever was gone, and Dr. Lyster permitted him to leave his room: a cough, however, remained, and journey to Bristol was settled to take place in three Cecilia, knowing he was now expected down stairs, has out of the parlour the moment she had finished her b fast; for, affected by his illness, and hurt at the app separation, she dreaded the first meeting, and fortify her mind for bearing it with propriety.

In a very few minutes, Lady Honoria, running entreated that she would come down; "for Mor cried, "is in the parlour, and the poor child is mad of by its papa and mama, that I wish they don't him by their ridiculous fondness. It is amazing t

is so patient with them, for if they teased me half as much, I should be ready to jump up and shake them. But I wish you would come down, for, I assure you, it's a comical scene."

"Your ladyship is soon diverted! but what is there so comical in the anxiety of parents for an only son?"

"Lord, they don't care a straw for him all the time! it's merely that he may live to keep up this old castle, which I hope in my heart he will pull down the moment they are dead! But do pray come; it will really give you spirits to see them all. The father keeps ringing the bell to order half a hundred pair of boots for him, and all the great coats in the county; and the mother sits and looks as if a hearse and mourning coach were already coming over the drawbridge: but the most diverting object among them is my Lord Derford! O, it's really too entertaining to see him! there he sits, thinking the whole time of his challenge! I intend to employ him all this afternoon in practising to shoot at a mark."

And then again she pressed her to join the group, and Cecilia, fearing her opposition might seem strange, consented.

Delvile arose at her entrance, and, with tolerable steadiness she congratulated him on his recovery; and then, taking her usual seat, employed herself in embroidering a screen. She joined too, occasionally, in the conversation, and observed, not without surprise, that Delvile seemed much less dejected than before his confinement.

Soon after, he ordered his horse, and, accompanied by Lord Derford, rode out. Mr. Delvile then took Lord Ernolf to show him some intended improvements in another part of the castle, and Lady Honoria walked away in search of any entertainment she could find.

Mrs. Delvile, in better spirits than she had been for many days, sent for her own work, and sitting by Cecilia, conversed with her again as in former times; mixing instruction with entertainment, and general satire with particular kindness, in a manner at once so lively and so flattering, that Cecilia herself reviving, found but little difficulty in bearing her part in the conversation.

And thus, with some gaiety, and tolerable ease, was spent

the greatest part of the morning; but just as they were talking of changing their dress for dinner, Lady Honoria, with an air of the utmost exultation, came flying into the room: "Well, ma'am," she cried, "I have some news now that I *must* tell you, because it will make you believe me another time: though I know it will put you in a passion."

"That's sweetly designed, at least!" said Mrs. Delvile, laughing; "however, I'll trust you, for my passions will not, just now, be irritated by straws."

"Why, ma'am, don't you remember I told you when you were in town that Mr. Mortimer kept a mistress—"

"Yes!" cried Mrs. Delvile, disdainfully, "and you may remember, Lady Honoria, I told you——"

"O, you would not believe a word of it! but it's all true, I assure you! and now he has brought her down here; he sent for her about three weeks ago, and he has boarded her at a cottage, about half a mile from the park-gate."

Cecilia, to whom Henrietta Belfield was instantly present, changed colour repeatedly, and turned so extremely sick, she could with difficulty keep her seat. She forced herself, however, to continue her work, though she knew so little what she was about, that she put her needle in and out of the same place without ceasing.

Meanwhile Mrs. Delvile, with a countenance of the utmost indignation, exclaimed "Lady Honoria, if you think a tale of scandal such as this reflects no disgrace upon its relater, you must pardon me for entreating you to find an auditor more of the same opinion than myself."

"Nay, ma'am, since you are so angry, I'll tell you the whole affair, for this is but half of it. He has a child here, too,——I vow I long to see it!—and he is so fond of it that he spends half his time in nursing it;—and that, I suppose, is the thing that takes him out so much; and I fancy, too, that's what has made him grow so grave, for may be he thinks it would not be pretty to be very frisky, now he's a papa."

Not only Cecilia, but Mrs. Delvile herself was now overpowered, and she sat for some time wholly silent and confounded. Lady Honoria then, turning to Cecilia, exclaimed, "Bless me, Miss Beverley, what are you about!

why that flower is the most ridiculous thing I ever saw! you have spoilt your whole work."

Cecilia, in the utmost confusion, though pretending to laugh, then began to unpick it; and Mrs. Delvile, recovering, more calmly, though not less angrily, said, "And has this tale the honour of being invented solely by your ladyship, or had it any other assistant?"

"O no, I assure you, it's no invention of mine; I had it from very good authority upon my word. But only look at Miss Beverley! would not one think I had said that she had a child herself? She looks as pale as death. My dear, I am sure you can't be well?"

"I beg your pardon," cried Cecilia, forcing a smile, though extremely provoked with her; "I never was better."

And then, with the hope of appearing unconcerned, she raised her head; but meeting the eyes of Mrs. Delvile fixed upon her face with a look of penetrating observation, abashed and guilty, she again dropt it, and resumed her work.

"Well, my dear," said Lady Honoria, "I am sure there is no occasion to send for Dr. Lyster to *you*, for you recover yourself in a moment: you have the finest colour now I ever saw: has not she, Mrs. Delvile? did you ever see any body blush so becomingly?"

"I wish, Lady Honoria," said Mrs. Delvile, with severity, "it were possible to see *you* blush!"

"O but I never do! not but what it's pretty enough too; but I don't know how it is, it never happens. Now Euphrasia can blush from morning to night. I can't think how she contrives it. Miss Beverley, too, plays at it vastly well; she's red and white, and white and red half a dozen times in a minute. Especially," looking at her archly, and lowering her voice, "if you talk to her of Mortimer!"

"No, indeed! no such thing!" cried Cecilia, with some resentment, and again looking up; but glancing her eyes towards Mrs. Delvile, and again meeting hers, filled with the strongest expression of enquiring solicitude, unable to sustain their inquisition, and shocked to find herself thus watchfully observed, she returned in hasty confusion to her employment.

"Well, my dear," cried Lady Honoria, again, "but what are you about now? do you intend to unpick the whole screen?"

"How can she tell what she is doing," said Mrs. Delvile, with quickness, "if you torment her thus incessantly? I will take you away from her, that she may have a little peace. You shall do me the honour to attend my toilette, and acquaint me with some further particulars of this extraordinary discovery."

Mrs. Delvile then left the room, but Lady Honoria, before she followed her, said, in a low voice, "Pity me, Miss Beverley, if you have the least good-nature! I am now going to hear a lecture of two hours long!"

Cecilia, left to herself, was in a perturbation almost insupportable. Delvile's mysterious conduct seemed the result of some entanglement of vice; Henrietta Belfield, the artless Henrietta Belfield, she feared had been abused, and her own ill-fated partiality, which now more than ever she wished unknown even to herself, was evidently betrayed where most the dignity of her mind made her desire it to be concealed!

In this state of shame, regret and resentment, which made her forget to change her dress, or her place, she was suddenly surprised by Delvile.

Starting and colouring, she busied herself with collecting her work, that she might hurry out of the room. Delvile, though silent himself, endeavoured to assist her; but when she would have gone, he attempted to stop her, saying, "Miss Beverley, for three minutes only."

"No, sir," cried she, indignantly, "not for an instant!" and leaving him utterly astonished, she hastened to her own apartment.

She was then sorry she had been so precipitate; nothing had been clearly proved against him; no authority was so likely to be fallacious as that of Lady Honoria; neither was he under any engagement to herself that could give her any right to manifest such displeasure. These reflections, however, came too late, and the quick feelings of her agitated mind were too rapid to wait the dictates of cool reason.

At dinner she attended wholly to Lord Ernolf, whose

assiduous politeness, profiting by the humour, saved her the painful effort of forcing conversation, or the guilty consciousness of giving way to silence, and enabled her to preserve her general tenor between taciturnity and loquaciousness. Mrs. Delvile she did not once dare look at; but her son, she saw, seemed greatly hurt; yet it was proudly, not sorrowfully, and therefore she saw it with less uneasiness.

During the rest of the day, which was passed in general society, Mrs. Delvile, though much occupied, frequently leaving the room, and sending for Lady Honoria, was more soft, kind and gentle with Cecilia than ever, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, often taking her hand, and speaking to her with even unusual sweetness. Cecilia with mingled sadness and pleasure observed this increasing regard, which she could not but attribute to the discovery made through Lady Honoria's mischievous intelligence, and which, while it rejoiced her with the belief of her approbation, added fresh force to her regret in considering it was fruitless. Delvile, meantime, evidently offended himself, conversed only with the gentlemen, and went very early into his own room.

When they were all retiring, Mrs. Delvile, following Cecilia, dismissed her maid to talk with her alone.

"I am not, I hope, often," she cried, "solicitous or importunate to speak about my son: his character, I believe, wants no vindication; clear and unsullied, it has always been its own support: yet the aspersion cast upon it this morning by Lady Honoria, I think myself bound to explain, not partially as his mother, but simply as his friend."

Cecilia, who knew not whither such an explanation might lead, nor wherefore it was made, heard this opening with much emotion, but gave neither to that nor to what followed any interruption.

Mrs. Delvile then continued: she had taken the trouble, she said, to sift the whole affair, in order to shame Lady Honoria by a pointed conviction of what she had invented, and to trace from the foundation the circumstances whence her surmises or report had sprung.

Delvile, it seems, about a fortnight before the present time, in one of his morning walks, had observed a gipsey

sitting by the side of the high road, who seemed extremely ill and who had a very beautiful child tied to her back.

Struck with the baby, he stopt to enquire to whom it belonged; to herself, she said, and begged his charity with the most pitiable cries of distress; telling him that she was travelling to join some of her fraternity, who were in a body near Bath, but was so ill with an ague and a fever, that she feared she should die on the road.

Delvile desired her to go to the next cottage, and promised to pay for her board there till she was better. He then spoke to the man and his wife who owned it to take them in, who, glad to oblige his honour, instantly consented; and he had since called twice to see in what manner they went on.

"How simple," continued Mrs. Delvile, "is a matter of fact in itself, and how complex when embellished! This tale has been told by the cottagers to our servants; it has travelled, probably gaining something from every mouth, to Lady Honoria's maid, and, having reached her ladyship, was swelled in a moment into all we heard! I think, however, that, for some time at least, her levity will be rather less daring. I have not, in this affair, at all spared her; I made her hear from Mortimer himself the little story as it happened; I then carried her to the cottage, where we had the whole matter confirmed; and I afterwards insisted upon being told myself by her maid all she had related to her lady, that she might thus be unanswerably convicted of inventing whatever she omitted. I have occasioned her some confusion, and, for the moment, a little resentment; but she is so volatile that neither will last; and though, with regard to my own family, I may perhaps have rendered her more cautious, I fear, with regard to the world in general, she is utterly incorrigible, because it has neither pleasure nor advantage to offer, that can compensate for the deprivation of relating one staring story, or ridiculous anecdote."

And then, wishing her good night, she added, "I make not any apology for this detail, which you owe not, believe me, to a mother's folly, but, if I know myself at all, to a love of truth and justice. Mortimer, independent of all connection with me, cannot but to everybody appear of a character which may be deemed even exemplary; calumny,

therefore, falling upon such a subject, injures not only himself but society, since it weakens all confidence in virtue, and strengthens the scepticism of depravity."

She then left her.

"Ah!" thought Cecilia, "to me, at least, this solicitude for his fame needs no apology! Humane and generous Delvile! never, again, will I a moment doubt your worthiness!" And then, cherishing that darling idea, she forgot all her cares and apprehensions, her quarrel, her suspicions, and the approaching separation, and, recompensed for every thing by this refutation of his guilt, she hastened to bed, and composed herself to rest.

CHAPTER VI.

A CONFERENCE.

EARLY the next morning Cecilia had a visit from Lady Honoria, who came to tell her story her own way, and laugh at the anxiety of Mrs. Delvile, and the trouble she had taken; "for, after all," continued she, "what did the whole matter signify? and how could I possibly help the mistake? when I heard of his paying for a woman's board, what was so natural as to suppose she must be his mistress? especially as there was a child in the case. O, how I wish you had been with us! you never saw such a ridiculous sight in your life; away we went in the chaise full drive to the cottage, frightening all the people almost into fits; out came the poor woman, away ran the poor man,—both of them thought the end of the world at hand! The gipsey was best off, for she went to her old business, and began begging. I assure you, I believe she would be very pretty if she was not so ill, and so I dare say Mortimer thought too, or I fancy he would not have taken such care of her."

"Fie; fie, Lady Honoria! will nothing bring conviction to you?"

"Nay, you know, there's no harm in that, for why should not pretty people live as well as ugly ones? There's no occasion to leave nothing in the world but frights. I looked

hard at the baby, to see if it was like Mortimer, but I could not make it out; those young things are like nothing. I tried if it would talk, for I wanted sadly to make it call Mrs. Delvile grandmama; however, the little urchin could say nothing to be understood. O what a rage would Mrs. Delvile have been in! I suppose this whole castle would hardly have been thought heavy enough to crush such an insolent brat, though it were to have fallen upon it all at a blow!"

Thus rattled this light-hearted lady till the family was assembled to breakfast; and then Cecilia, softened towards Delvile by newly-excited admiration, as well as by the absence which would separate them the following day, intended, by every little courteous office in her power, to make her peace with him before his departure: but she observed, with much chagrin, that Mrs. Delvile never ceased to watch her, which, added to an air of pride in the coldness of Delvile, that he had never before assumed, discouraged her from making the attempt, and compelled her to seem quiet and unconcerned.

As soon as breakfast was over, the gentlemen all rode or walked out; and when the ladies were by themselves, Lady Honoria suddenly exclaimed, "Mrs. Delvile, I can't imagine for what reason you send Mr. Mortimer to Bristol."

"For a reason, Lady Honoria, that with all your wildness, I should be very sorry you should know better by experience."

"Why then, ma'am, had we not better make a party, and all go? Miss Beverley, should you like to join it? I am afraid it would be vastly disagreeable to you."

Cecilia, now again was *red and white, and white and red, a dozen times in a minute;* and Mrs. Delvile, rising and taking her hand, expressively said, "Miss Beverley, you have a thousand times too much sensibility for this mad-cap of a companion. I believe I shall punish her by taking you away from her all this morning; will you come and sit with me in the dressing-room?"

Cecilia assented without daring to look at her, and followed in trembling, up stairs. Something of importance, she fancied, would ensue, her secret she saw was revealed, and therefore she could form no conjecture but that Delvile

would be the subject of their discourse: yet whether to explain his behaviour, or plead his cause, whether to express her separate approbation, or communicate some intelligence from himself, she had neither time, opportunity, nor clue to unravel. All that was undoubted seemed the affection of Mrs. Delvile, all that, on her own part, could be resolved, was to suppress her partiality till she knew if it might properly be avowed.

Mrs. Delvile, who saw her perturbation, led immediately to subjects of indifference, and talked upon them so long, and with so much ease, that Cecilia, recovering her composure, began to think she had been mistaken, and that nothing was intended but a tranquil conversation.

As soon, however, as she had quieted her apprehensions, she sat silent herself, with a look that Cecilia easily construed into thoughtful perplexity in what manner she should introduce what she meant to communicate.

This pause was succeeded by her speaking of Lady Honoria; "how wild, how careless, how incorrigible she is! she lost her mother early; and the Duke, who idolizes her, and who, marrying very late, is already an old man, she rules entirely; with him, and a supple governess, who has neither courage to oppose her, nor heart to wish well but to her own interest, she has lived almost wholly. Lately, indeed, she has come more into the world, but without even a desire of improvement, and with no view and no thought but to gratify her idle humour by laughing at whatever goes forward."

"She certainly neither wants parts nor discernment," said Cecilia; "and, when my mind is not occupied by other matters, I find her conversation entertaining and agreeable."

"Yes," said Mrs. Delvile, "but that light sort of wit which attacks, with equal alacrity, what is serious or what is gay, is twenty times offensive, to once that it is exhilarating; since it shows that while its only aim is self-diversion, it has the most insolent negligence with respect to any pain it gives to others. The rank of Lady Honoria, though it has not rendered her proud, nor even made her conscious she has any dignity to support, has yet given her saucy indifference whom she pleases or hurts, that borders upon

what in a woman is of all things the most odious, a daring defiance of the world and its opinions."

Cecilia, never less disposed to enter upon her defence, made but little answer; and, soon after, Mrs. Delvile added, "I heartily wish she were properly established; and yet, according to the pernicious manners and maxims of the present age, she is perhaps more secure from misconduct while single, than she will be when married. Her father, I fear, will leave her too much to herself, and in that case I scarce know what may become of her; she has neither judgment nor principle to direct her choice, and therefore, in all probability, the same whim which one day will guide it, will the next lead her to repent it."

Again they were both silent; and then Mrs. Delvile, gravely, yet with energy exclaimed, "How few are there, how very few, who marry at once upon principles rational, and feelings pleasant! Interest and inclination are eternally at strife, and where either is wholly sacrificed, the other is inadequate to happiness. Yet how rarely do they divide the attention! the young are rash, and the aged are mercenary: their deliberations are never in concert, their views are scarce ever blended; one vanquishes, and the other submits; neither party temporizes, and commonly each is unhappy."

"The time," she continued, "is now arrived when reflections of this sort cannot too seriously occupy me; the errors I have observed in others, I would fain avoid committing; yet such is the blindness of self-love, that perhaps, even at the moment I censure them, I am falling, without consciousness, into the same! Nothing, however, shall through negligence be wrong; for where is the son who merits care and attention, if Mortimer from his parents deserves not to meet them?"

The expectations of Cecilia were now again awakened, and awakened with fresh terrors, lest Mrs. Delvile, from compassion, meant to offer her services; vigorously, therefore, she determined to exert herself, and rather give up Mortimer and all thoughts of him for ever, than submit to receive assistance in persuading him to the union.

"Mr. Delvile," she continued, "is most earnest and impatient that some alliance should take place without further delay; and for myself, could I see him with propriety and

with happiness disposed of, what a weight of anxiety would be removed from my heart!"

Cecilia now made an effort to speak, attempting to say, "Certainly, it is a matter of great consequence;" but so low was her voice, and so confused her manner, that Mrs. Delvile, though attentively listening, heard not a word. She forbore, however, to make her repeat what she said, and went on herself as if speaking in answer.

"Not only his own, but the peace of his whole family will depend upon his election, since he is the last of his race. This castle and estate, and another in the north, were entailed upon him by the late Lord Delvile, his grandfather, who, disobliged by his eldest son, the present lord, left every thing he had power to dispose of to his second son, Mr. Delvile, and at his death, to his grandson, Mortimer. And even the present lord, though always at variance with his brother, is fond of his nephew, and has declared him his heir. I, also, have one sister, who is rich, who has no children, and who has made the same declaration. Yet though with such high expectations, he must not connect himself imprudently; for his paternal estate wants repair, and he is well entitled with a wife to expect what it requires."

"Most true!" thought Cecilia; yet ashamed of her recent failure, she applied herself to her work, and would not again try to speak.

"He is amiable, accomplished, well educated, and well born; far may we look, and not meet with his equal; no woman need disdain, and few women would refuse him."

Cecilia blushed her concurrence; yet could well at that moment have spared hearing the eulogy.

"Yet how difficult," she continued, "to find a proper alliance! there are many who have some recommendations, but who is there wholly unexceptionable?"

This question seemed unanswerable, nor could Cecilia devise what it meant.

"Girls of high family have but seldom large fortunes, since the heads of their house commonly require their whole wealth for the support of their own dignity; while, on the other hand, girls of large fortune are frequently ignorant, insolent, or low born; kept up by their friends lest they should fall a prey to adventurers, they have no acquaintance

with the world, and little enlargement from education; their instructions are limited to a few merely youthful accomplishments; the first notion they imbibe is of their own importance, the first lesson they are taught is the value of riches, and even from their cradles, their little minds are narrowed, and their self-sufficiency is excited, by cautions to beware of fortune-hunters, and assurances that the whole world will be at their feet. Among such should we seek a companion for Mortimer? Surely not. Formed for domestic happiness, and delighting in elegant society, his mind would disdain an alliance in which its affections had no share."

Cecilia, colouring and trembling, thought now the moment of her trial was approaching, and half mortified and half frightened prepared herself to sustain it with firmness.

"I venture, therefore, my dear Miss Beverley, to speak to you upon this subject as a friend who will have patience to hear my perplexities; you see upon what they hang,—where the birth is such as Mortimer Delvile may claim, the fortune generally fails; and where the fortune is adequate to his expectations, the birth yet more frequently would disgrace us."

Cecilia, astonished by this speech, and quite off her guard from momentary surprise, involuntarily raised her head to look at Mrs. Delvile, in whose countenance she observed the most anxious concern, though her manner of speaking had seemed placid and composed.

"Once," she continued, without appearing to remark the emotion of her auditor, "Mr. Delvile thought of uniting him with his cousin Lady Honoria; but he never could endure the proposal; and who shall blame his repugnance? Her sister, indeed, Lady Euphrasia, is much preferable, her education has been better, and her fortune is much more considerable. At present, however, Mortimer seems greatly averse to her, and who has a right to be difficult, if we deny it to him?"

Wonder, uncertainty, expectation and suspense now all attacked Cecilia, and all harassed her with redoubled violence; why she was called to this conference she knew not; the approbation she had thought so certain, she doubted, and the proposal of assistance she had apprehended, she

ceased to think would be offered: some fearful mystery, some cruel obscurity, still clouded all her prospects, and not merely obstructed her view of the future, but made what was immediately before her gloomy and indistinct.

The state of her mind seemed read by Mrs. Delvile, who examined her with eyes of such penetrating keenness, that they rather made discoveries than enquiries. She was silent some time, and looked irresolute, how to proceed; but at length she arose, and taking Cecilia by the hand, who almost drew it back from her dread of what would follow, she said "I will torment you no more, my sweet young friend, with perplexities which you cannot relieve: this only I will say, and then drop the subject for ever; when my solicitude for Mortimer is removed, and he is established to the satisfaction of us all, no care will remain in the heart of his mother, half so fervent, so anxious and so sincere as the disposal of my amiable Cecilia, for whose welfare and happiness my wishes are even maternal."[1]

She then kissed her glowing cheek, and, perceiving her almost stupified with astonishment, spared her any effort to speak, by hastily leaving her in possession of her room.

Undeceived in her expectations, and chilled in her hopes, the heart of Cecilia no longer struggled to sustain its dignity, or conceal its tenderness; the conflict was at an end; Mrs. Delvile had been open, though her son was mysterious; but, in removing her doubts, she had bereft her of her peace. She now found her own mistake in building upon her approbation; she saw nothing was less in her intentions, and that even when most ardent in affectionate regard, she separated her interest from that of her son, as if their union was a matter of utter impossibility. "Yet why," cried Cecilia, "oh why is it deemed so! that she loves me, she is ever

[1] "'How wonderfully you have contrived,' she [Mrs. Walsingham] added, 'to make one love Mrs. Delvile for her sweetness to Cecilia, notwithstanding all her pride, and always to hope the pride is commanded by the husband.' 'No, ma'am,' answered I, 'I merely meant to shew how differently pride, like every other quality, operates upon different minds, and that, though it is so odious when joined with meanness and incapacity, as in Mr. Delvile, it destroys neither respect nor affection when joined with real dignity and generosity of mind, as in Mrs. Delvile.'"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 209, vol. ii.

eager to proclaim, that my fortune would be peculiarly useful, she makes not a secret, and that I, at least, should start no insuperable objections, she has, alas! but too obviously discovered! Has she doubts of her son?—no, she has too much discernment; the father, then, the haughty, impracticable father, has destined him for some woman of rank, and will listen to no other alliance."

This notion somewhat soothed her in the disappointment she suffered; yet to know herself betrayed to Mrs. Delvile, and to see no other consequence ensue but that of exciting a tender compassion, which led her to discourage, from benevolence, hopes too high to be indulged, was a mortification so severe, that it caused her a deeper depression of spirits than any occurrence of her life had yet occasioned. "What Henrietta Belfield is to me," she cried, "I am to Mrs. Delvile! but what in her is amiable and artless, in me is disgraceful and unworthy. And this is the situation which so long I have desired! This is the change of habitation which I thought would make me so happy! oh, who can choose, who can judge for himself? who can point out the road to his own felicity, or decide upon the spot where his peace will be ensured!" Still, however, she had something to do, some spirit to exert, and some fortitude to manifest: Mortimer, she was certain, suspected not his own power; his mother, she knew, was both too good and too wise to reveal it to him; and she determined, by caution and firmness upon his leave-taking and departure, to retrieve, if possible, that credit with Mrs. Delvile, which she feared her betrayed susceptibility had weakened.

As soon, therefore, as she recovered from her consternation, she quitted Mrs. Delvile's apartment, and seeking Lady Honoria herself, determined not to spend even a moment alone, till Mortimer was gone; lest the sadness of her reflections should overpower her resolution, and give a melancholy to her air and manner which he might attribute, with but too much justice, to concern upon his own account.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ATTACK.

AT dinner, with the assistance of Lord Ernolf, who was most happy to give it, Cecilia seemed tolerably easy. Lord Derford, too, encouraged by his father, endeavoured to engage some share of her attention; but he totally failed; her mind was superior to little arts of coquetry, and her pride had too much dignity to evaporate in pique; she determined, therefore, at this time, as at all others, to be consistent in showing him he had no chance of her favour.

At tea, when they were again assembled, Mortimer's journey was the only subject of discourse, and it was agreed that he should set out very early in the morning, and, as the weather was extremely hot, not travel at all in the middle of the day.

Lady Honoria then, in a whisper to Cecilia, said, "I suppose, Miss Beverley, you will rise with the lark to-morrow morning? for your health, I mean. Early rising, you know, is vastly good for you."

Cecilia, affecting not to understand her, said she should rise, she supposed, at her usual time.

"I'll tell Mortimer, however," returned her ladyship, "to look up at your window before he goes off; for if he will play Romeo, you, I dare say, will play Juliet, and this old castle is quite the thing for the musty family of the Capulets: I dare say Shakespear thought of it when he wrote of them."

"Say to him what you please for yourself," cried Cecilia, "but let me entreat you to say nothing for me."

"And my Lord Derford," continued she, "will make an excessive pretty Paris, for he is vastly in love, though he has got nothing to say; but what shall we do for a Mercutio? we may find 500 whining Romeos to one gay and charming Mercutio. Besides, Mrs. Delvile, to do her justice, is really too good for the old Nurse, though Mr. Delvile himself may serve for all the Capulets and all the Montagues at once, for he has pride enough for both their houses, and twenty more

besides. By the way, if I don't take care, I shall have this Romeo run away before I have made my little dainty county Paris pick a quarrel with him."

She then walked up to one of the windows, and motioning Lord Derford to follow her, Cecilia heard her say to him, "Well, my lord, have you writ your letter? and have you sent it? Miss Beverley, I assure you, will be charmed beyond measure by such a piece of gallantry."

"No, ma'am," answered the simple young lord, "I have not sent it yet, for I have only writ a foul copy."

"O, my lord," cried she, "that is the very thing you ought to send! a foul copy of a challenge is always better than a fair one, for it looks written with more agitation. I am vastly glad you mentioned that."

Cecilia then, rising and joining them, said, "What mischief is Lady Honoria about now? we must all be upon our guards, my lord, for she has a spirit of diversion that will not spare us."

"Pray why do you interfere?" cried Lady Honoria, and then, in a lower voice, she added, "What do you apprehend? do you suppose Mortimer cannot manage such a poor little idiot as this?"

"I don't suppose any thing about the matter!"

"Well, then, don't interrupt my operations. Lord Derford, Miss Beverley has been whispering me, that if you put this scheme in execution, she shall find you, ever after, irresistible."

"Lord Derford, I hope," said Cecilia, laughing, "is too well acquainted with your ladyship to be in any danger of credulity."

"Vastly well!" cried she, "I see you are determined to provoke me; so if you spoil my schemes, I will spoil yours, and tell a certain gentleman your tender terrors for his safety."

Cecilia now, extremely alarmed, most earnestly entreated her to be quiet; but the discovery of her fright only excited her ladyship's laughter, and, with a look the most mischievously wicked, she called out "Pray, Mr. Mortimer, come hither!"

Mortimer instantly obeyed; and Cecilia at the same moment would with pleasure have endured almost any punishment to have been twenty miles off.

"I have something," continued her ladyship, "of the utmost consequence to communicate to you. We have been settling an admirable plan for you; will you promise to be guided by us if I tell it you?"

"O certainly!" cried he; "to doubt that would disgrace us all round."

"Well, then,—Miss Beverley, have you any objection to my proceeding?"

"None at all!" answered Cecilia, who had the understanding to know that the greatest excitement to ridicule is opposition.

"Well, then, I must tell you," she continued, "it is the advice of us all, that as soon as you come to the possession of your estate, you make some capital alterations in this ancient castle."

Cecilia, greatly relieved, could with gratitude have embraced her: and Mortimer, very certain that such rattle was all her own, promised the utmost submission to her orders, and begged her further directions, declaring that he could not, at least, desire a fairer architect.

"What we mean," said she, "may be effected with the utmost ease; it is only to take out these old windows, and fix some thick iron grates in their place; and so turn the castle into a gaol for the county."

Mortimer laughed heartily at this proposition; but his father, unfortunately hearing it, sternly advanced, and with great austerity said, "If I thought my son capable of putting such an insult upon his ancestors, whatever may be the value I feel for him, I would banish him my presence for ever."

"Dear sir," cried Lady Honoria, "how would his ancestors ever know it?"

"How?—why—that is a very extraordinary question, Lady Honoria!"

"Besides, sir, I dare say the sheriff, or the mayor and corporation, or some of those sort of people, would give him money enough, for the use of it, to run him up a mighty pretty neat little box somewhere near Richmond."

"A box!" exclaimed he indignantly; "a neat little box for the heir of an estate such as this!"

"I only mean," cried she, giddily, "that he might have some place a little more pleasant to live in, for really that

old moat and draw-bridge are enough to vapour him to death; I cannot for my life imagine any use they are of: unless, indeed, to frighten away the deer, for nothing else offers to come over. But, if you were to turn the house into a gaol—"

"A gaol?" cried Mr. Delvile, still more angrily, "your ladyship must pardon me if I entreat you not to mention that word again when you are pleased to speak of Delvile castle."

"Dear sir, why not?"

"Because it is a term that, in itself, from a young lady, has a sound peculiarly improper; and which, applied to any gentleman's ancient family seat,—a thing, Lady Honoria, always respectable, however lightly spoken of!—has an effect the least agreeable that can be devised; for it implies an idea either that the family, or the mansion, is going into decay."

"Well, sir, you know, with regard to the mansion, it is certainly very true, for all that other side, by the old tower, looks as if it would fall upon one's head every time one is forced to pass it."

"I protest, Lady Honoria," said Mr. Delvile, "that old tower, of which you are pleased to speak so slightingly, is the most honourable testimony to the antiquity of the castle of any now remaining, and I would not part with it for all the new boxes, as you stile them, in the kingdom."

"I am sure I am very glad of it, sir, for I dare say nobody would give even one of them for it."

"Pardon me, Lady Honoria, you are greatly mistaken; they would give a thousand; such a thing, belonging to a man from his own ancestors, is invaluable."

"Why, dear sir, what in the world could they do with it? unless, indeed, they were to let some man paint it for an opera scene."

"A worthy use, indeed!" cried Mr. Delvile, more and more affronted: "and pray does your ladyship talk thus to my Lord Duke?"

"O yes; and he never minds it at all."

"It were strange if he did!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "my only astonishment is that anybody can be found who *does* mind it."

"Why now, Mrs. Delvile," she answered, "pray be sincere; can you possibly think this gothic ugly old place at all comparable to any of the new villas about town?"

"Gothic ugly old place!" repeated Mr. Delvile, in utter amazement at her dauntless flightiness; "your ladyship really does my humble dwelling too much honour!"

"Lord, I beg a thousand pardons!" cried she, "I really did not think of what I was saying. Come, dear Miss Beverley, and walk out with me, for I am too much shocked to stay a moment longer."

And then, taking Cecilia by the arm, she hurried her into the park, through a door which led thither from the parlour.

"For heaven's sake, Lady Honoria," said Cecilia, "could you find no better entertainment for Mr. Delvile than ridiculing his own house?"

"O," cried she, laughing, "did you never hear us quarrel before? why when I was here last summer, I used to affront him ten times a day."

"And was that a regular ceremony?"

"No, really, I did not do it purposely; but it so happened; either by talking of the castle, or the tower, or the drawbridge, or the fortifications; or wishing they were all employed to fill up that odious moat; or something of that sort; for you know a small matter will put him out of humour."

"And do you call it so small a matter, to wish a man's whole habitation annihilated?"

"Lord, I don't wish anything about it! I only say so to provoke him."

"And what strange pleasure can that give you?"

"O, the greatest in the world! I take much delight in seeing any body in a passion. It makes them look so excessively ugly!"

"And is that the way you like *everybody* should look, Lady Honoria?"

"O, my dear, if you mean *me*, I never was in a passion twice in my life; for as soon as ever I have provoked the people, I always run away. But sometimes I am in a dreadful fright lest they should see me laugh, for they make such horrid grimaces it is hardly possible to look at

them. When my father has been angry with me, I have sometimes been obliged to pretend I was crying, by way of excuse for putting my handkerchief to my face; for really he looks so excessively hideous, you would suppose he was making mouths, like the children, merely to frighten one."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Cecilia, "your ladyship, can, indeed, never want diversion, to find it in the anger of your father. But does it give you no other sensation? are you not afraid?"

"O, never! what can he do to me, you know? he can only storm a little, and swear a little, for he always swears when he is angry; and perhaps order me to my own room; and ten to one but that happens to be the very thing I want; for we never quarrel but when we are alone, and then it's so dull, I am always wishing to run away."

"And can you take no other method of leaving him?"

"Why, I think, none so easily: and it can do him no harm, you know: I often tell him, when we make friends, that if it were not for a postillion and his daughter, he would be quite out of practice in scolding and swearing; for whenever he is upon the road he does nothing else: though why he is in such a hurry, nobody can divine, for go whither he will he has nothing to do."

Thus ran on this flighty lady, happy in high animal spirits, and careless who was otherwise, till, at some distance, they perceived Lord Derford, who was approaching to join them.

"Miss Beverley," cried she, "here comes your adorer: I shall therefore only walk on till we arrive at that large oak, and then make him prostrate himself at your feet, and leave you together."

"Your ladyship is extremely good! but I am glad to be apprised of your intention, as it will enable me to save you that trouble."

She then turned quick back, and passing Lord Derford, who still walked on towards Lady Honoria, she returned to the house: but upon entering the parlour, found all the company dispersed, Delvile alone excepted, who was walking about the room, with his tablets in his hand, in which he had been writing.

From a mixture of shame and surprise, Cecilia, at the

sight of him, was involuntarily retreating; but, hastening to the door, he called out in a reproachful tone, "Will you not even enter the same room with me?"

"O yes," cried she, returning; "I was only afraid I disturbed you."

"No, madam," answered he, gravely; "you are the only person who could *not* disturb me, since my employment was making memorandums for a letter to yourself: with which, however, I did not desire to importune you, but that you have denied me the honour of even a five minutes audience."

Cecilia, in the utmost confusion at this attack, knew not whether to stand still or proceed; but, as he presently continued his speech, she found she had no choice but to stay.

"I should be sorry to quit this place, especially as the length of my absence is extremely uncertain, while I have the unhappiness to be under your displeasure, without making some little attempt to apologize for the behaviour which incurred it. Must I, then, finish my letter, or will you at last deign to hear me?"

"My displeasure, sir," said Cecilia, "died with its occasion; I beg, therefore, that it may rest no longer in your remembrance."

"I meant not, madam, to infer, that the subject, or indeed that the object, merited your deliberate attention; I simply wish to explain what may have appeared mysterious in my conduct, and for what may have seemed still more censurable, to beg your pardon."

Cecilia now, recovered from her first apprehensions, and calmed, because piqued, by the calmness with which he spoke himself, made no opposition to his request, but suffering him to shut both the door leading into the garden, and that which led into the hall, she seated herself at one of the windows, determined to listen with intrepidity to this long expected explanation.

The preparations, however, which he made to obviate being overheard, added to the steadiness with which Cecilia waited his further proceedings, soon robbed him of the courage with which he began the assault, and evidently gave him a wish of retreating himself.

At length, after much hesitation, he said, "This indul-

gence, madam, deserves my most grateful acknowledgments; it is, indeed, what I had little right, and still less reason, after the severity I have met with from you, to expect."

And here, at the very mention of severity, his courage, called upon by his pride, instantly returned, and he went on with the same spirit he had begun.

"That severity, however, I mean not to lament; on the contrary, in a situation such as mine, it was perhaps the first blessing I could receive; I have found from it, indeed, more advantage and relief than from all that philosophy, reflection or fortitude could offer. It has shown me the vanity of bewailing the barrier placed by fate to my wishes, since it has shown me that another, less inevitable, but equally insuperable, would have opposed them. I have determined, therefore, after a struggle I must confess the most painful, to deny myself the dangerous solace of your society, and endeavour, by joining dissipation to reason, to forget the too great pleasure which hitherto it has afforded me."

"Easy, sir," cried Cecilia, "will be your task? I can only wish the re-establishment of your health may be found no more difficult."

"Ah, madam," cried he, with a reproachful smile, "*he jests at scars who never felt a wound!*—but this is a strain in which I have no right to talk, and I will neither offend your delicacy, nor my own integrity, by endeavouring to work upon the generosity of your disposition in order to excite your compassion. Not such was the motive with which I begged this audience; but merely a desire, before I tear myself away, to open to you my heart, without palliation or reserve."

He paused a few moments; and Cecilia finding her suspicions just that this interview was meant to be final, considered that her trial, however severe, would be short, and called forth all her resolution to sustain it with spirit.

"Long before I had the honour of your acquaintance," he continued, "your character and your accomplishments were known to me: Mr. Biddulph, of Suffolk, who was my first friend at Oxford, and with whom my intimacy is still undiminished, was early sensible of your excellencies: we corresponded, and his letters were filled with your praises.

He confessed to me, that his admiration had been unfortunate:—alas! I might now make the same confession to him?"

Mr. Biddulph, among many of the neighbouring gentlemen, had made proposals to the Dean for Cecilia, which, at her desire, were rejected.

"When Mr. Harrel saw masks in Portman-square, my curiosity to behold a lady so adored, and so cruel, led me thither; your dress made you easily distinguished.—Ah, Miss Beverley! I venture not to mention what I then felt for my friend! I will only say that something which I felt for myself, warned me instantly to avoid you, since the clause in your uncle's will was already well known to me."

"Now, then, at last," thought Cecilia, "all perplexity is over!—the change of name is the obstacle; he inherits all the pride of his family,—and therefore to that family will I unrepining leave him!"

"This warning," he continued, "I should not have disregarded, had I not, at the opera, been deceived into a belief you were engaged; I then wished no longer to shun you; bound in honour to forbear all efforts at supplanting a man, to whom I thought you almost united, I considered you already as married, and eagerly as I sought your society, I sought it not with more pleasure than innocence. Yet even then, to be candid, I found in myself a restlessness about your affairs that kept me in eternal perturbation: but I flattered myself it was mere curiosity, and only excited by the perpetual change of opinion to which occasion gave rise, concerning which was the happy man."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, coolly, "there was any such mistake."

"I will not, madam, fatigue you," he returned, "by tracing the progress of my unfortunate admiration; I will endeavour to be more brief, for I see you are already wearied." He stopt a moment, hoping for some little encouragement; but Cecilia, in no humour to give it, assumed an air of unconcern, and sat wholly quiet.

"I knew not," he then went on, with a look of extreme mortification, "the warmth with which I honoured your virtues, till you deigned to plead to me for Mr. Belfield—but let me not recollect the feelings of that moment!—yet

were they nothing,—cold, languid, lifeless to what I afterwards experienced, when you undeceived me finally with respect to your situation, and informed me the report concerning Sir Robert Floyer was equally erroneous with that which concerned Belfield! O, what was the agitation of my whole soul at that instant!—to know you disengaged,—to see you before me,—by the disorder of my whole frame to discover the mistake I had cherished—"

Cecilia then, half rising, yet again seating herself, looked extremely impatient to be gone.

"Pardon me, madam," he cried; "I will have done, and trace my feelings and my sufferings no longer, but hasten, for my own sake as well as yours, to the reason why I have spoken at all. From the hour that my ill-destined passion was fully known to myself, I weighed all the consequences of indulging it, and found, added to the extreme hazard of success, an impropriety even in the attempt. *My* honour in the honour of my family is bound! what to that would seem wrong, in me would be unjustifiable: yet where inducements so numerous were opposed by one single objection!—where virtue, beauty, education and family were all unexceptionable,—Oh, cruel clause! barbarous and repulsive clause! that forbids my aspiring to the first of women, but by an action that with my own family would degrade me for ever!"

He stopt, overpowered by his own emotion, and Cecilia arose. "I see, madam," he cried, "your eagerness to be gone, and however at this moment I may lament it, I shall recollect it hereafter with advantage. But to conclude: I determined to avoid you, and, by avoiding, to endeavour to forget you: I determined, also, that no human being, and yourself least of all, should know, should even suspect the situation of my mind: and though upon various occasions, my prudence and forbearance have suddenly yielded to surprise and to passion, the surrender has been short, and almost, I believe, unnoticed.

"This silence and this avoidance I sustained with decent constancy, till, during the storm, in an ill-fated moment, I saw, or thought I saw you in some danger, and then, all caution off guard, all resolution surprised, every passion awake, and tenderness triumphant——"

"Why, sir," cried Cecilia, angrily, "and for what purpose all this?"

"Alas, I know not!" said he, with a deep sigh: "I thought myself better qualified for this conference, and meant to be firm and concise. I have told my story ill, but as your own understanding will point out the cause, your own benevolence will perhaps urge some excuse.

"Too certain, since that unfortunate accident, that all disguise was vain, and convinced by your displeasure of the impropriety of which I had been guilty, I determined, as the only apology I could offer, to open to you my whole heart, and then fly you perhaps for ever.

"This, madam, incoherently indeed, yet with sincerity, I have now done: my sufferings and my conflicts I do not mention, for I dare not! O, were I to paint to you the bitter struggles of a mind all at war with itself,—duty, spirit, and fortitude, combating love, happiness and inclination,—each conquering alternately, and alternately each vanquished,—I could endure it no longer, I resolved by one effort to finish the strife, and to undergo an instant of even exquisite torture, in preference to a continuance of such lingering misery!"

"The restoration of your health, sir, and since you fancy it has been injured, of your happiness," said Cecilia, "will, I hope, be as speedy, as I doubt not they are certain."

"*Since I fancy it has been injured!*" repeated he; "what a phrase, after an avowal such as mine! But why should I wish to convince you of my sincerity, when to you it cannot be more indifferent than to myself it is unfortunate! I have now only to entreat your pardon for the robbery I have committed upon your time, and to repeat my acknowledgments that you have endeavoured to hear me with patience."

"If you honour me, sir, with some portion of your esteem," said the offended Cecilia, "these acknowledgments, perhaps, should be mine; suppose them, however, made, for I have a letter to write, and can therefore stay no longer."

"Nor do I presume, madam," cried he, proudly, "to detain you: hitherto you may frequently have thought me mysterious, sometimes strange and capricious, and perhaps

almost always unmeaning; to clear myself from these imputations, by a candid confession of the motives which have governed me, is all that I wished. Once, also—I hope but once, you thought me impertinent,—there, indeed, I less dare vindicate myself—"

"There is no occasion, sir," interrupted she, walking towards the door, "for further vindication in any thing; I I am perfectly satisfied, and if my good wishes are worth your acceptance, assure yourself you possess them."

"Barbarous and insulting!" cried he, half to himself; and then, with a quick motion hastening to open the door for her, "Go, madam," he added, almost breathless with conflicting emotions, "go, and be your happiness unalterable as your inflexibility!"

Cecilia was turning back to answer this reproach, but the sight of Lady Honoria, who was entering at the other door, deterred her, and she went on.

When she came to her own room, she walked about it some time in a state so unsettled, between anger and disappointment, sorrow and pride, that she scarce knew to which emotion to give way, and felt almost bursting with each.

"The dye," she cried, "is at last thrown; and this affair is concluded for ever! Delvile himself is content to relinquish me: no father has commanded, no mother has interfered, he has required no admonition, full well enabled to act for himself by the powerful instigation of hereditary arrogance! Yet my family, he says,—unexpected condescension! my family and every other circumstance is unexceptionable; how feeble, then, is that regard which yields to one only objection! how potent that haughtiness which to nothing will give way! Well, let him keep his name! since so wondrous its properties, so all-sufficient its preservation, what vanity, what presumption in me, to suppose myself an equivalent for its loss!"

Thus, deeply offended, her spirits were supported by resentment, and not only while in company, but when alone, she found herself scarce averse to the approaching separation, and enabled to endure it without repining.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RETREAT.

THE next morning Cecilia arose late, not only to avoid the raillery of Lady Honoria, but to escape seeing the departure of Delvile; she knew that the spirit with which she had left him, made him, at present, think her wholly insensible, and she was at least happy to be spared the mortification of a discovery, since she found him thus content, without even solicitation, to resign her!

Before she was dressed, Lady Honoria ran into her room, "A new scheme of politics!" she cried; "our great statesman intends to leave us: he can't trust his baby out of his sight, so he is going to nurse him while upon the road himself. Poor, pretty, dear Mortimer! what a puppet do they make of him! I have a vast inclination to get a pap-boat myself, and make him a present of it."

Cecilia then enquired further particulars, and heard that Mr. Delvile purposed accompanying his son to Bristol, whose journey, therefore, was postponed for a few hours to give time for new preparations.

Mr. Delvile, who, upon this occasion, thought himself overwhelmed with business, because, before his departure, he had some directions to give to his domestics, chose to breakfast in his own apartment: Mrs. Delvile, also, wishing for some private conversation with her son, invited him to partake of her's in her dressing-room, sending an apology to her guests, and begging they would order their breakfasts when they pleased.

Mr. Delvile, scrupulous in ceremony, had made sundry apologies to Lord Ernolf for leaving him; but his real anxiety for his son overpowering his artificial character, the excuses he gave to that nobleman were such as could not possibly offend; and the views of his lordship himself in his visit, being nothing interrupted, so long as Cecilia continued at the castle, he readily engaged, as a proof that he was not affronted, to remain with Mrs. Delvile till his return.

Cecilia, therefore, had her breakfast with the two lords and Lady Honoria; and when it was over, Lord Ernolf proposed to his son riding the first stage with the two Mr. Delviles on horseback. This was agreed upon, and they left the room: and then Lady Honoria, full of frolic and gaiety, seized one of the napkins, and protested she would send it to Mortimer for a *slabbering-bib:* she therefore made it up in a parcel, and wrote upon the inside of the paper with which she enveloped it, "A *pin-a-fore* for Master Mortimer Delvile, lest he should daub his pappy when he is feeding him." Eager to have this properly conveyed, she then ran out, to give it in charge to her own man, who was to present him with it as he got into the chaise.

She had but just quitted the room, when the door of it was again opened, and by Mortimer himself, booted, and equipped for his journey.

"Miss Beverley here! and alone!" cried he, with a look, and in a voice, which showed that all the pride of the preceding evening was sunk into the deepest dejection; "and does she not fly as I approach her; can she patiently bear in her sight one so strange, so fiery, so inconsistent? But she is too wise to resent the ravings of a madman;—and who, under the influence of a passion at once hopeless and violent, can boast, but at intervals, full possession of his reason!"

Cecilia, utterly astonished by a gentleness so humble, looked at him in silent surprise; he advanced to her mournfully, and added, "I am ashamed, indeed, of the bitterness of spirit with which I last night provoked your displeasure, when I should have supplicated your lenity: but though I was prepared for your coldness, I could not endure it, and though your indifference was almost friendly, it made me little less than frantic; so strangely may justice be blinded by passion, and every faculty of reason be warped by selfishness!"

"You have no apology to make, sir," cried Cecilia, "since, believe me, I require none,"

"You may well," returned he, half-smiling, "dispense with my apologies, since under the sanction of that word, I obtained your hearing yesterday. But, believe me, you will now find me far more reasonable; a whole night's re-

flections—reflections which no repose interrupted!—have brought me to my senses. Even lunatics, you know, have lucid moments!"

"Do you intend, sir, to set off soon?"

"I believe so; I wait only for my father. But why is Miss Beverley so impatient? I shall not soon *return*; that, at least, is certain, and, for a few instants delay, may surely offer some palliation:——See! if I am not ready to again accuse you of severity!—I must run, I find, or all my boasted reformation will end but in fresh offence, fresh disgrace, and fresh contrition! Adieu, madam!—and may all prosperity attend you! That will ever be my darling wish, however long my absence, however distant the climates which may part us!"

He was then hurrying away, but Cecilia, from an impulse of surprise too sudden to be restrained, exclaimed, "The climates?—do you, then, mean to leave England?"

"Yes," cried he, with quickness, "for why should I remain in it? a few weeks only could I fill up in any tour so near home; and hither in a few weeks to return would be folly and madness: in an absence so brief, what thought but that of the approaching meeting would occupy me? and what, at that meeting, should I feel, but joy the most dangerous, and delight which I dare not think of!—every conflict renewed, every struggle re-felt, again all this scene would require to be acted, again I must tear myself away, and every tumultuous passion now beating in my heart would be revived, and, if possible, be revived with added misery!—No!—neither my temper nor my constitution will endure such another shock, one parting shall suffice, and the fortitude with which I will lengthen my self-exile, shall atone to myself for the weakness which makes it requisite!"

And then, with a vehemence that seemed fearful of the smallest delay, he was again, and yet more hastily going, when Cecilia, with much emotion, called out, "Two moments, sir!"

"Two thousand! two million!" cried he, impetuously, and returning, with a look of the most earnest surprise, he added, "What is it Miss Beverley will condescend to command?"

"Nothing," cried she, recovering her presence of mind, "but to beg you will by no means, upon my account, quit your country and your friends, since another asylum can be found for myself, and since I would much sooner part from Mrs. Delvile, greatly and sincerely as I reverence her, than be instrumental to robbing her, even for a month, of her son."

"Generous and humane is the consideration," cried he; "but who half so generous, so humane as Miss Beverley? so soft to all others, so noble in herself? Can my mother have a wish, when I leave her with you? No; she is sensible of your worth, she adores you, almost as I adore you myself! you are now under her protection, you seem, indeed, born for each other; let me not, then, deprive her of so honourable a charge:—Oh, why must he, who sees in such colours the excellencies of both, who admires with such fervour the perfections you unite, be torn with this violence from the objects he reveres, even though half his life he would sacrifice, to spend in their society, what remained!"—

"Well, then, sir," said Cecilia, who now felt her courage decline, and the softness of sorrow steal fast upon her spirits, "if you will not give up your scheme, let me no longer detain you."

"Will you not wish me a good journey?"

"Yes,—very sincerely."

"And will you pardon the unguarded errors which have offended you?"

"I will think of them, sir, no more."

"Farewell, then, most amiable of women, and may every blessing you deserve light on your head! I leave to you my mother, certain of your sympathetic affection for a character so resembling your own. When *you*, madam, leave her, may the happy successor in your favour—" He paused, his voice faltered. Cecilia, too, turned away from him, and, uttering a deep sigh, he caught her hand, and pressing it to his lips, exclaimed, "O, great be your felicity, in whatever way you receive it!—pure as your virtues, and warm as your benevolence!—Oh, too lovely Miss Beverley!—why, why must I quit you!"

Cecilia, though she trusted not her voice to reprove him, forced away her hand, and then, in the utmost perturbation, he rushed out of the room.

This scene, for Cecilia, was the most unfortunate that could have happened; the gentleness of Delvile was alone sufficient to melt her, since her pride had no subsistence when not fed by his own; and while his mildness had blunted her displeasure, his anguish had penetrated her heart. Lost in thought and in sadness, she continued fixed to her seat; and looking at the door through which he had passed, as if, with himself, he had shut out all for which she existed.

This pensive dejection was not long uninterrupted; Lady Honoria came running back, with intelligence, in what manner she had disposed of her napkin, and Cecilia in listening, endeavoured to find some diversion; but her ladyship, though volatile not undiscerning, soon perceived that her attention was constrained, and looking at her with much archness, said, "I believe, my dear, I must find another napkin for *you!* not, however, for your *mouth*, but for your *eyes!* Has Mortimer been in to take leave of you?"

"Take leave of me?——No,—is he gone?"

"O no, Pappy has a world of business to settle first; he won't be ready these two hours. But don't look so sorrowful, for I'll run and bring Mortimer to console you."

Away she flew, and Cecilia, who had no power to prevent her, finding her spirits unequal either to another parting, or to the raillery of Lady Honoria, should Mortimer, for his own sake, avoid it, took refuge in flight, and seizing an umbrella, escaped into the Park; where, to perplex any pursuers, instead of choosing her usual walk, she directed her steps to a thick and unfrequented wood, and never rested till she was more than two miles from the house. Fidel, however, who now always accompanied her, ran by her side, and, when she thought herself sufficiently distant and private to be safe, she sat down under a tree, and caressing her faithful favourite, soothed her own tenderness by lamenting that *he* had lost his master; and, having now no part to act, and no dignity to support, no observation to fear, and no inference to guard against, she gave vent to her long smothered emotions, by weeping without caution or restraint.

She had met with an object whose character answered all her wishes for him with whom she should entrust her

fortune, and whose turn of mind, so similar to her own, promised her the highest domestic felicity: to this object her affections had involuntarily bent, they were seconded by esteem, and unchecked by any suspicion of impropriety in her choice: she had found too, in return, that his heart was all her own: her birth, indeed, was inferior, but it was not disgraceful; her disposition, education and temper seemed equal to his fondest wishes: yet, at the very time when their union appeared most likely, when they mixed with the same society, and dwelt under the same roof, when the father to one, was the guardian to the other, and interest seemed to invite their alliance even more than affection, the young man himself, without counsel or command, could tear himself from her presence by an effort all his own, forbear to seek her heart, and almost charge her not to grant it, and determining upon voluntary exile, quit his country and his connections with no view, and for no reason, but merely that he might avoid the sight of her he loved!

Though the motive for this conduct was now no longer unknown to her, she neither thought it satisfactory nor necessary; yet, while she censured his flight, she bewailed his loss, and though his inducement was repugnant to her opinion, his command over his passions she admired and applauded.

CHAPTER IX.

A WORRY.

CECILIA continued in this private spot, happy at least to be alone, till she was summoned by the dinner bell to return home.

As soon as she entered the parlour, where every body was assembled before her, she observed, by the countenance of Mrs. Delvile, that she had passed the morning as sadly as herself.

"Miss Beverley," cried Lady Honoria, before she was seated, "I insist upon your taking my place to-day."

"Why so, madam?"

"Because I cannot suffer you to sit by a window with such a terrible cold."

"Your ladyship is very good, but indeed I have not any cold at all."

"O, my dear, I must beg your pardon there; your eyes are quite blood-shot; Mrs. Delvile, Lord Ernolf, are not her eyes quite red?—Lord, and so I protest are her cheeks! now do pray look in the glass; I assure you you will hardly know yourself."

Mrs. Delvile, who regarded her with the utmost kindness, affected to understand Lady Honoria's speech literally, both to lessen her apparent confusion, and the suspicious surmises of Lord Ernolf; she therefore said, "you have indeed a bad cold, my love; but shade your eyes with your hat, and after dinner you shall bathe them in rose water, which will soon take off the inflammation."

Cecilia, perceiving her intention, for which she felt the utmost gratitude, no longer denied her cold, nor refused the offer of Lady Honoria; who, delighting in mischief, whencesoever it proceeded, presently added, "This cold is a judgment upon you for leaving me alone all this morning; but I suppose you chose a tête à tête with your favourite, without the intrusion of any third person."

Here everybody stared, and Cecilia very seriously declared she had been quite alone.

"Is it possible you can so forget yourself?" cried Lady Honoria; "had you not your dearly beloved with you?"

Cecilia, who now comprehended that she meant Fidel, coloured more deeply than ever, but attempted to laugh, and began eating her dinner.

"Here seems some matter of much intricacy," cried Lord Ernolf, "but, to me, wholly unintelligible."

"And to me also," cried Mrs. Delvile, "but I am content to let it remain so; for the mysteries of Lady Honoria are so frequent, that they deaden curiosity."

"Dear madam, that is very unnatural," cried Lady Honoria, "for I am sure you must long to know who I mean."

"*I* do, at least," said Lord Ernolf.

"Why then, my lord, you must know, Miss Beverley has two companions, and I am one, and Fidel is the other; but

Fidel was with her all this morning, and she would not admit me to the conference. I suppose she had something private to say to him of his master's journey."

"What rattle is this?" cried Mrs. Delvile; "Fidel is gone with my son, is he not?" turning to the servants.

"No, madam, Mr. Mortimer did not enquire for him."

"That's very strange," said she; "I never knew him quit home without him before."

"Dear ma'am, if he had taken him," cried Lady Honoria, "what could poor Miss Beverley have done? for she has no friend here but him and me, and really he's so much the greater favourite, that it is well if I do not poison him some day for very spite."

Cecilia had no resource but in forcing a laugh, and Mrs. Delvile, who evidently felt for her, contrived soon to change the subject: yet not before Lord Ernolf, with infinite chagrin, was certain by all that passed of the desperate state of affairs for his son.

The rest of the day, and every hour of the two days following, Cecilia passed in the most comfortless constraint, fearful of being a moment alone, lest the heaviness of her heart should seek relief in tears, which consolation, melancholy as it was, she found too dangerous for indulgence: yet the gaiety of Lady Honoria lost all power of entertainment, and even the kindness of Mrs. Delvile, now she imputed it to compassion, gave her more mortification than pleasure.

On the third day, letters arrived from Bristol: but they brought with them nothing of comfort, for though Mortimer wrote gaily, his father sent word that his fever seemed threatening to return.

Mrs. Delvile was now in the extremest anxiety; and the task of Cecilia in appearing cheerful and unconcerned became more and more difficult to perform. Lord Ernolf's efforts to oblige her grew as hopeless to himself as they were irksome to her; and Lady Honoria alone, of the whole house, could either find or make the smallest diversion. But while Lord Derford remained, she had still an object for ridicule, and while Cecilia could colour and be confused, she had still a subject for mischief.

Thus passed a week, during which the news from Bristol

being every day less and less pleasant, Mrs. Delvile showed an earnest desire to make a journey thither herself, and proposed, half laughing and half seriously, that the whole party should accompany her.

Lady Honoria's time, however, was already expired, and her father intended to send for her in a few days.

Mrs. Delvile, who knew that such a charge would occupy all her time, willingly deferred setting out till her ladyship should be gone, but wrote word to Bristol that she should shortly be there, attended by the two lords, who insisted upon escorting her.

Cecilia now was in a state of the utmost distress; her stay at the castle she knew kept Delvile at a distance; to accompany his mother to Bristol, was forcing herself into his sight, which equally from prudence and pride she wished to avoid; and even Mrs. Delvile evidently desired her absence, since whenever the journey was talked of, she preferably addressed herself to any one else who was present.

All she could devise to relieve herself from a situation so painful, was begging permission to make a visit without delay to her old friend Mrs. Charlton, in Suffolk.

This resolution taken, she put it into immediate execution, and seeking Mrs. Delvile, enquired if she might venture to make a petition to her?

"Undoubtedly," answered she; "but let it not be very disagreeable, since I feel already that I can refuse you nothing."

"I have an old friend, ma'am," she then cried, speaking fast, and in much haste to have done, "who I have not for many months seen, and, as *my* health does not require a Bristol journey,—if you would honour me with mentioning my request to Mr. Delvile, I think I might take the present opportunity of making Mrs. Charlton a visit."

Mrs. Delvile looked at her some time without speaking, and then, fervently embracing her, "sweet Cecilia!" she cried, "yes, you are all that I thought you! good, wise, discreet, tender, and noble at once!—how to part with you, indeed, I know not,—but you shall do as you please, for that I am sure will be right, and therefore I will make no opposition."

Cecilia blushed and thanked her, yet saw but too plainly

that all the motives of her scheme were clearly comprehended. She hastened, therefore, to write to Mrs. Charlton, and prepare her for her reception.

Mr. Delvile, though with his usual formality, sent his permission: and Mortimer, at the same time, begged his mother would bring Fidel with her, whom he had unluckily forgotten.

Lady Honoria, who was present when Mrs. Delvile mentioned this commission, said in a whisper to Cecilia, "Miss Beverley, don't let him go."

"Why not?"

"O, you had a great deal better take him slily into Suffolk."

"I would as soon," answered Cecilia, "take with me the side-board of plate, for I should scarcely think it more a robbery."

"O, I beg your pardon, I am sure they might all take such a theft for an honour; and if I was going to Bristol, I would bid Mortimer send him to you immediately. However, if you wish it, I will write to him. He's my cousin, you know, so there will be no great impropriety in it."

Cecilia thanked her for so courteous an offer, but entreated that she might by no means draw her into such a condescension.

She then made immediate preparations for her journey into Suffolk, which she saw gave equal surprise and chagrin to Lord Ernolf, upon whose affairs Mrs. Delvile herself now desired to speak with her.

"Tell me, Miss Beverley," she cried, "briefly and positively your opinion of Lord Derford."

"I think of him so little, madam," she answered, "that I cannot say of him much; he appears, however, to be inoffensive; but, indeed, were I never to see him again, he is one of those I should forget I had ever seen at all."

"That is so exactly the case with myself, also," cried Mrs. Delvile, "that to plead for him, I find utterly impossible, though my Lord Ernolf has strongly requested me: but to press such an alliance, I should think an indignity to your understanding."

Cecilia was much gratified by this speech; but she soon after added, "There is one reason, indeed, which would

render such a connection desirable, though that is only one."

"What is it, madam?"

"His title."

"And why so? I am sure I have no ambition of that sort."

"No, my love," said Mrs. Delvile, smiling, "I mean not by way of gratification to *your* pride, but to *his;* since a title, by taking place of a family name, would obviate the *only* objection that *any* man could form to an alliance with Miss Beverley."

Cecilia, who too well understood her, suppressed a sigh, and changed the subject of conversation.

One day was sufficient for all the preparations she required, and as she meant to set out very early the next morning, she took leave of Lady Honoria, and the Lords Ernolf and Derford, when they separated for the night; but Mrs. Delvile followed her to her room.

She expressed her concern at losing her in the warmest and most flattering terms, yet said nothing of her coming back, nor of the length of her stay; she desired, however, to hear from her frequently, and assured her that out of her own immediate family, there was nobody in the world she so tenderly valued.

She continued with her till it grew so late that they were almost necessarily parted: and then rising, to be gone, "See," she cried, "with what reluctance I quit you! no interest but so dear a one as that which calls me away, should induce me, with my own consent, to bear your absence scarcely an hour: but the world is full of mortifications, and to endure, or to sink under them, makes all the distinction between the noble or the weak-minded. To *you* this may be said with safety; to most young women it would pass for a reflection."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, smothering the emotions to which this speech gave rise, "and if indeed you honour me with an opinion so flattering, I will endeavour, if it is possibly in my power, not to forfeit it."

"Ah, my love!" cried Mrs. Delvile, warmly, "if upon my opinion of *you* alone depended our residence with each other, when should we ever part, and how live a moment asunder?

But what title have I to monopolize two such blessings? the mother of Mortimer Delvile should at nothing repine; the mother of Cecilia Beverley had alone equal reason to be proud."

"You are determined, madam," said Cecilia, forcing a smile, "that I *shall* be worthy, by giving me the sweetest of motives, that of deserving such praise." And then, in a faint voice, she desired her respects to Mr. Delvile, and added, "you will find, I hope, everybody at Bristol better than you expect."

"I hope so," returned she; "and that you too will find your Mrs. Charlton well, happy, and good as you left her: but suffer her not to drive *me* from your remembrance, and never fancy that because she has known you longer, she loves you more; my acquaintance with you, though short, has been critical, and she must hear from you a world of anecdotes, before she can have reason to love you as much."

"Ah, madam," cried Cecilia, tears starting into her eyes, "let us part now!——where will be that strength of mind you expect from me, if I listen to you any longer!"

"You are right, my love," answered Mrs. Delvile, "since all tenderness enfeebles fortitude." Then affectionately embracing her, "Adieu," she cried, "sweetest Cecilia, amiable and most excellent creature, adieu!—you carry with you my highest approbation, my love, my esteem, my fondest wishes!—and shall I—yes, generous girl! I *will* add, my warmest gratitude!"[1]

This last word she spoke almost in a whisper, again kissed her, and hastened out of the room.

Cecilia, surprised and affected, gratified and depressed, remained almost motionless, and could not, for a great length of time, either ring for her maid, or persuade herself to go to rest. She saw throughout the whole behaviour of

[1] "I meant in Mrs. Delvile to draw a great, but not a perfect character; I meant, on the contrary, to blend upon paper, as I have frequently seen blended in life, noble and rare qualities with striking and incurable defects. I meant, also, to shew how the greatest virtues and excellences may be totally obscured by the indulgence of violent passions and the ascendancy of favourite prejudices." *Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, March 15, 1782.—*Diary*, p. 128, vol. ii.

Mrs. Delvile, a warmth of regard which, though strongly opposed by family pride, made her almost miserable to promote the very union she thought necessary to discountenance; she saw, too, that it was with the utmost difficulty she preserved the steadiness of her opposition, and that she had a conflict perpetual with herself, to forbear openly acknowledging the contrariety of her wishes, and the perplexity of her distress; but chiefly she was struck with her expressive use of the word gratitude. "Wherefore should she be grateful?" thought Cecilia, "what have I done, or had power to do? Infinitely, indeed, is she deceived, if she supposes that her son has acted by my directions; my influence with him is nothing, and he could not be more his own master, were he utterly indifferent to me. To conceal my own disappointment has been all I have attempted; and perhaps she may think of me thus highly, from supposing that the firmness of her son is owing to my caution and reserve: ah, she knows him not!——were my heart at this moment laid open to him,—were all its weakness, its partiality, its ill-fated admiration displayed, he would but double his vigilance to avoid and forget me, and find the task all the easier by his abatement of esteem. Oh, strange infatuation of unconquerable prejudice! his very life will he sacrifice in preference to his name, and while the conflict of his mind threatens to level him with the dust, he disdains to unite himself where one wish is unsatisfied!"

These reflections, and the uncertainty if she should ever in Delvile castle sleep again, disturbed her the whole night, and made all calling in the morning unnecessary. She arose at five o'clock, dressed herself with the utmost heaviness of heart, and in going through a long gallery which led to the stair-case, as she passed the door of Mortimer's chamber, the thought of his ill health, his intended long journey, and the probability that she might never see him more, so deeply impressed and saddened her, that scarcely could she force herself to proceed, without stopping to weep and to pray for him; she was surrounded, however, by servants, and compelled therefore to hasten to the chaise; she flung herself in, and leaning back, drew her hat over her eyes, and thought as the carriage drove off, her last hope of earthly happiness extinguished.

CHAPTER X.

A RENOVATION.

CECILIA was accompanied by her maid in the chaise, and her own servant and one of Mrs. Delvile's attended her on horseback.

The quietness of her dejection was soon interrupted by a loud cry among the men of "home! home! home!" She then looked out of one of the windows, and perceived Fidel, running after the carriage, and barking at the servants, who were all endeavouring to send him back.

Touched by this proof of the animal's gratitude for her attention to him, and conscious she had herself occasioned his master's leaving him, the scheme of Lady Honoria occurred to her, and she almost wished to put it in execution; but this was the thought of a moment, and motioning him with her hand to go back, she desired Mrs. Delvile's man to return with him immediately, and commit him to the care of somebody in the castle.

This little incident, however trifling, was the most important of her journey, for she arrived at the house of Mrs. Charlton without meeting any other.

The sight of that lady gave her a sensation of pleasure to which she had long been a stranger, pleasure pure, unmixed, unaffected and unrestrained: it revived all her early affection, and with it something resembling at least her early tranquillity: again she was in the house where it had once been undisturbed, again she enjoyed the society which was once all she had wished, and again saw the same scene, the same faces, and same prospects she had beheld while her heart was all devoted to her friends.

Mrs. Charlton, though old and infirm, preserved an understanding, which, whenever unbiassed by her affections, was sure to direct her unerringly; but the extreme softness of her temper frequently misled her judgment, by making it, at the pleasure either of misfortune or of artifice, always yield to compassion, and pliant to entreaty. Where her counsel and opinion were demanded, they were certain to

reflect honour on her capacity and discernment; but where her assistance or her pity were supplicated, her purse and her tears were immediately bestowed, and in her zeal to alleviate distress she forgot if the object were deserving her solicitude, and stopt not to consider propriety or discretion, if happiness, however momentary, were in her power to grant.

This generous foible was, however, kept somewhat in subjection by the watchfulness of two grand-daughters, who, fearing the injury they might themselves receive from it, failed not to point out both its inconvenience and its danger.

These ladies were daughters of a deceased and only son of Mrs. Charlton; they were single, and lived with their grand-mother, whose fortune, which was considerable, they expected to share between them, and they waited with eagerness for the moment of appropriation. Narrow-minded and rapacious, they wished to monopolize whatever she possessed, and thought themselves aggrieved by her smallest donations. Their chief employment was to keep from her all objects of distress, and in this though they could not succeed, they at least confined her liberality to such as resembled themselves; since neither the spirited could brook, nor the delicate support the checks and rebuffs from the grand-daughters which followed the gifts of Mrs. Charlton. Cecilia, of all her acquaintance, was the only one whose intimacy they encouraged, for they knew her fortune made her superior to any mercenary views, and they received from her themselves more civilities than they paid.

Mrs. Charlton loved Cecilia with an excess of fondness, that not only took place of the love she bore her other friends, but to which even her regard for the Miss Charltons was inferior and feeble. Cecilia when a child had reverenced her as a mother, and, grateful for her tenderness and care, had afterwards cherished her as a friend. The revival of this early connection delighted them both; it was balm to the wounded mind of Cecilia, it was renovation to the existence of Mrs. Charlton.

Early the next morning she wrote a card to Mr. Monckton and Lady Margaret, acquainting them with her return

into Suffolk, and desiring to know when she might pay her respects to her ladyship. She received from the old lady a verbal answer, *when she pleased*, but Mr. Monckton came instantly himself to Mrs. Charlton's.

His astonishment, his rapture at this unexpected incident were almost boundless: he thought it a sudden turn of fortune in his own favour, and concluded, now she had escaped the danger of Delvile Castle, the road was short and certain that led to his own security.

Her satisfaction in the meeting was as sincere though not so animated as his own: but this similarity in their feelings was of short duration, for when he enquired into what had passed at the castle, with the reasons of her quitting it, the pain she felt in giving even a cursory and evasive account, was opposed on his part by the warmest delight in hearing it. He could not obtain from her the particulars of what had happened, but the reluctance with which she spoke, the air of mortification with which she heard his questions, and the evident displeasure which was mingled in her chagrin, when he forced her to mention Delvile, were all proofs the most indisputable and satisfactory, that they had either parted without any explanation, or with one by which Cecilia had been hurt and offended.

He now readily concluded that since the fiery trial he had most apprehended was over, and she had quitted in anger the asylum she had sought in ecstasy, Delvile himself did not covet the alliance, which, since they were separated, was never likely to take place. He had therefore little difficulty in promising all success to himself.

She was once more upon the spot where she had regarded him as the first of men; he knew that during her absence, no one had settled in the neighbourhood who had any pretensions to dispute with him that pre-eminence; he should again have access to her at pleasure; and so sanguine grew his hopes, that he almost began to rejoice even in the partiality to Delvile, that had hitherto been his terror, from believing it would give her, for a time, that sullen distaste of all other connections, to which those who at once are delicate and fervent, are commonly led by early disappointment. His whole solicitude therefore now was to preserve her esteem, to seek her confidence, and to regain whatever

by absence might be lost, of the ascendant over her mind, which her respect for his knowledge and capacity had for many years given him. Fortune at this time seemed to prosper all his views, and, by a stroke the most sudden and unexpected, to render more rational his hopes and his plans, than he had himself been able to effect by the utmost craft of worldly wisdom.

The day following, Cecilia, in Mrs. Charlton's chaise, waited upon Lady Margaret. She was received by Miss Bennet, her companion, with the most fawning courtesy; but when conducted to the lady of the house, she saw herself so evidently unwelcome, that she even regretted the civility which had prompted her visit.

She found with her nobody but Mr. Morrice, who was the only young man that could persuade himself to endure her company in the absence of her husband, but who, in common with most young men who are assiduous in their attendance upon old ladies, doubted not but he ensured himself a handsome legacy for his trouble.

Almost the first speech which her ladyship made, was, "So you are not married yet, I find; if Mr. Monckton had been a real friend, he would have taken care to have seen for some establishment for you."

"I was by no means," cried Cecilia, with spirit, "either in so much haste or distress as to require from Mr. Monckton any such exertion of his friendship."

"Ma'am," cried Morrice, "what a terrible night we had of it at Vauxhall! Poor Harrel! I was really excessively sorry for him. I had not courage to see you or Mrs. Harrel after it. But as soon as I heard you were in St. James's-square, I tried to wait upon you; for really going to Mr. Harrel's again would have been quite too dismal. I would rather have run a mile by the side of a race-horse."

"There is no occasion for any apology," said Cecilia, "for I was very little disposed either to see or think of visitors."

"So I thought, ma'am;" answered he, with quickness, "and really that made me the less alert in finding you out. However, ma'am, next winter I shall be excessively happy to make up for the deficiency; besides, I shall be much obliged to you to introduce me to Mr. Delvile, for I have a great desire to be acquainted with him."

Mr. Delvile, thought Cecilia, would be proud to hear it! However, she merely answered that she had no present prospect of spending any time at Mr. Delvile's next winter.

"True, ma'am, true," cried he, "now I recollect, you become your own mistress between this and then; and so I suppose you will naturally choose a house of your own, which will be much more eligible."

"I don't think that," said Lady Margaret; "I never saw anything eligible come of young women's having houses of their own; she will do a much better thing to marry, and have some proper person to take care of her."

"Nothing more right, ma'am!" returned he, "a young lady in a house by herself must be subject to a thousand dangers. What sort of place, ma'am, has Mr. Delvile got in the country? I hear he has a good deal of ground there, and a large house."

"It is an old castle, sir, and situated in a park."

"That must be terribly forlorn: I dare say, ma'am, you were very happy to return into Suffolk."

"I did not find it forlorn; I was very well satisfied with it."

"Why, indeed, upon second thoughts, I don't much wonder; an old castle in a large park must make a very romantic appearance; something noble in it, I dare say."

"Aye," cried Lady Margaret, "they said you were to become mistress of it, and marry Mr. Delvile's son; and I cannot, for my own part, see any objection to it."

"I am told of so many strange reports," said Cecilia, "and all to myself so unaccountable, that I begin now to hear of them without much wonder."

"That's a charming young man, I believe," said Morrice; "I had the pleasure once or twice of meeting him at poor Harrel's, and he seemed mighty agreeable. Is not he so, ma'am?"

"Yes,—I believe so."

"Nay, I don't mean to speak of him as anything very extraordinary," cried Morrice, imagining her hesitation proceeded from dislike, "I merely meant, as the world goes,—in a common sort of way."

Here they were joined by Mr. Monckton and some gentlemen who were on a visit at his house; for his anxiety

was not of a sort to lead him to solitude, nor his disposition to make him deny himself any kind of enjoyment which he had power to attain. A general conversation ensued, which lasted till Cecilia ended her visit; Mr. Monckton then took her hand to lead her to the chaise, but told her, in their way out, of some alterations in his grounds, which he desired to show her: his view of detaining her was to gather what she thought of her reception, and whether she had yet any suspicions of the jealousy of Lady Margaret; well knowing, from the delicacy of her character, that if once she became acquainted with it, she would scrupulously avoid all intercourse with him, from the fear of increasing her uneasiness.

He began, therefore, with talking of the pleasure which Lady Margaret took in the plantations, and of his hope that Cecilia would often favour her by visiting them, without waiting to have her visits returned, as she was entitled by her infirmities to particular indulgencies. He was continuing in this strain, receiving from Cecilia hardly any answer, when suddenly from behind a thick laurel bush jumpt up Mr. Morrice; who had run out of the house by a shorter cut, and planted himself there to surprise them.

"So ho!" cried he, with a loud laugh, "I have caught you! This will be a fine anecdote for Lady Margaret; I vow I'll tell her."

Mr. Monckton, never off his guard, readily answered, "Aye, prithee do, Morrice; but don't omit to relate also what we said of yourself."

"Of me?" cried he, with some eagerness; "why you never mentioned me."

"O, that won't pass, I assure you; we shall tell another tale at table by and by; and bring the old proverb of the ill luck of listeners upon you in its full force."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I know what you mean!"

"Why you won't pretend you did not hear Miss Beverley say you were the truest ourang outang, or man-monkey, she ever knew?"

"No, indeed, that I did not!"

"No?—Nor how much she admired your dexterity in escaping being horse-whipt three times a day for your incurable impudence?"

"Not a word on't! Horse-whipt!—Miss Beverley, pray did you say any such thing?"

"Ay," cried Monckton again, "and not only horse-*whipt*, but horse-*ponded;* for she thought when one had heated, the other might cool you; and then you might be fitted again for your native woods, for she insists upon it you were brought from Africa, and are not yet half tamed."

"O lord!" cried Morrice, amazed, "I should not have suspected Miss Beverley would have talked so!"

"And do you suspect she did now?" cried Cecilia.

"Pho, pho," cried Monckton, coolly, "why he heard it himself the whole time! and so shall all our party by and bye, if I can but remember to mention it."

Cecilia then returned to the chaise, leaving Mr. Monckton to settle the matter with his credulous guest as he pleased; for supposing he was merely gratifying a love of sport, or taking this method of checking the general forwardness of the young man, she forbore any interference that might mar his intention.

But Mr. Monckton loved not to be rallied concerning Cecilia, though he was indifferent to all that could be said to him of any other woman; he meant, therefore, to intimidate Morrice from renewing the subject; and he succeeded to his wish. Poor Morrice, whose watching and whose speech were the mere blunders of chance, made without the slightest suspicion of Mr. Monckton's designs, now apprehended some scheme to render himself ridiculous, and though he did not believe Cecilia had made use of such expressions, he fancied Mr. Monckton meant to turn the laugh against him, and determined, therefore, to say nothing that might remind him of what had passed.

Mr. Monckton had at this time admitted him to his house merely from an expectation of finding more amusement in his blundering and giddiness, than he was capable, during his anxiety concerning Cecilia, of receiving from conversation of an higher sort.

The character of Morrice was, indeed, particularly adapted for the entertainment of a large house in the country; eager for sport, and always ready for enterprize; willing to oblige, yet tormented with no delicacy about offending; the first to promote mischief for any other, and the last to be offended

when exposed to it himself; gay, thoughtless, and volatile, —a happy composition of levity and good humour.

Cecilia, however, in quitting the house, determined not to visit it again very speedily; for she was extremely disgusted with Lady Margaret, though she suspected no particular motives of enmity, against which she was guarded alike by her own unsuspicious innocence, and by a high esteem of Mr. Monckton, which she firmly believed he returned with equal honesty of undesigning friendship.

Her next excursion was to visit Mrs. Harrel; she found that unhappy lady a prey to all the misery of unoccupied solitude: torn from whatever had, to her, made existence seem valuable, her mind was as listless as her person was inactive, and she was at a loss how to employ even a moment of the day: she had now neither a party to form, nor an entertainment to plan, company to arrange, nor dress to consider; and these, with visits and public places, had filled all her time since her marriage, which, as it happened very early in her life, had merely taken place of girlish amusements, masters and governesses.

This helplessness of insipidity, however, though naturally the effect of a mind devoid of all genuine resources, was dignified by herself with the appellation of sorrow: nor was this merely a screen to the world; unused to investigate her feelings or examine her heart, the general compassion she met for the loss of her husband, persuaded her that indeed she lamented his destiny; though had no change in her life been caused by his suicide, she would scarcely, when the first shock was over, have thought of it again.

She received Cecilia with great pleasure; and with still greater, heard the renewal of her promises to fit up a room for her in her house, as soon as she came of age; a period which now was hardly a month distant.

Far greater, however, as well as infinitely purer, was the joy which her presence bestowed upon Mr. Arnott; she saw it herself with a sensation of regret, not only at the constant passion which occasioned it, but even at her own inability to participate in or reward it: for with him an alliance would meet with no opposition; his character was amiable, his situation in life unexceptionable: he loved her with the tenderest affection, and no pride, she well knew,

would interfere to overpower it; yet, in return, to grant him her love, she felt as utterly impossible as to refuse him her esteem: and the superior attractions of Delvile, of which neither displeasure nor mortification could rob him, shut up her heart, for the present, more firmly than ever, as Mr. Monckton had well imagined, to all other assailants.

Yet she by no means weakly gave way to repining or regret: her suspense was at an end, her hopes and her fears were subsided into certainty; Delvile, in quitting her, had acquainted her that he left her for ever, and even, though not, indeed, with much steadiness, had prayed for her happiness in union with some other; she held it therefore as essential to her character as to her peace, to manifest equal fortitude in subduing her partiality; she forbore to hint to Mrs. Charlton what had passed, that the subject might never be started; allowed herself no time for dangerous recollection; strolled in her old walks, and renewed her old acquaintance, and by a vigorous exertion of active wisdom, doubted not completing, before long, the subjection of her unfortunate tenderness. Nor was her task so difficult as she had feared; resolution, in such cases, may act the office of time, and anticipate by reason and self-denial, what that, much less nobly, effects through forgetfulness and inconstancy.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT.

ONE week only, however, had yet tried the perseverance of Cecilia, when, while she was working with Mrs. Charlton in her dressing-room, her maid hastily entered it, and with a smile that seemed announcing welcome news, said, "Lord, ma'am, here's Fidel!" and, at the same moment, she was followed by the dog, who jumpt upon Cecilia in a transport of delight.

"Good heaven," cried she, all amazement, "who has brought him? whence does he come?"

"A country-man brought him, ma'am; but he only put him in, and would not stay a minute."

"But whom did he enquire for?—who saw him?—what did he say?"

"He saw Ralph, ma'am."

Ralph, then, was instantly called: and these questions being repeated, he said, "Ma'am, it was a man I never saw before; but he only bid me take care to deliver the dog into your own hands, and said you would have a letter about him soon, and then went away: I wanted him to stay till I came up stairs, but he was off at once."

Cecilia, quite confounded by this account, could make neither comment nor answer; but, as soon as the servants had left the room, Mrs. Charlton entreated to know to whom the dog had belonged, convinced by her extreme agitation, that something interesting and uncommon must relate to him.

This was no time for disguise; astonishment and confusion bereft Cecilia of all power to attempt it; and, after a very few evasions, she briefly communicated her situation with respect to Delvile, his leaving her, his motives, and his mother's evident concurrence: for these were all so connected with her knowledge of Fidel, that she led to them unavoidably in telling what she knew of him.

Very little penetration was requisite, to gather from her manner all that was omitted in her narrative, of her own feelings and disappointment in the course of this affair: and Mrs. Charlton, who had hitherto believed the whole world at her disposal, and that she continued single from no reason but her own difficulty of choice, was utterly amazed to find that any man existed, who could withstand the united allurements of so much beauty, sweetness, and fortune. She felt herself sometimes inclined to hate, and at other times to pity him; yet concluded that her own extreme coldness was the real cause of his flight, and warmly blamed a reserve which had thus ruined her happiness.

Cecilia was in the extremest perplexity and distress to conjecture the meaning of so unaccountable a present, and so strange a message. Delvile, she knew, had desired the dog might follow him to Bristol: his mother, always

pleased to oblige him, would now less than ever neglect any opportunity: she could not, therefore, doubt that she had sent or taken him thither, and thence, according to all appearances, he must now come. But was it likely Delvile would take such a liberty? Was it probable, when so lately he had almost exhorted her to forget him, he would even wish to present her with such a remembrance of himself? And what was the letter she was bid to expect? Whence and from whom was it to come?

All was inexplicable! the only thing she could surmise, with any semblance of probability, was, that the whole was some frolic of Lady Honoria Pemberton, who had persuaded Delvile to send her the dog, and perhaps assured him she had herself requested to have him.

Provoked by this suggestion, her first thought was instantly having him conveyed to the castle; but, uncertain what the whole affair meant, and hoping some explanation in the letter she was promised, she determined to wait till it came, or at least till she heard from Mrs. Delvile, before she took any measures herself in the business. Mutual accounts of their safe arrivals at Bristol and in Suffolk, had already passed between them, and she expected very soon to have further intelligence: though she was now, by the whole behaviour of Mrs. Delvile, convinced she wished not again to have her an inmate of her house, and that the rest of her minority might pass, without opposition, in the house of Mrs. Charlton.

Day after day, however, passed, and yet she heard nothing more; a week, a fortnight elapsed, and still no letter came. She now concluded the promise was a deception, and repented that she had waited a moment with any such expectation. Her peace, during this time, was greatly disturbed; this present made her fear she was thought meanly of by Mr. Delvile; the silence of his mother gave her apprehensions for his health, and her own irresolution how to act, kept her in perpetual inquietude. She tried in vain to behave as if this incident had not happened; her mind was uneasy, and the same actions produced not the same effects; when she now worked or read, the sight of Fidel by her side distracted her attention; when she walked, it was the same, for Fidel always followed her; and though, in visit-

ing her old acquaintance, she forbore to let him accompany her, she was secretly planning the whole time the contents of some letter, which she expected to meet with, on returning to Mrs. Charlton's.

Those gentlemen in the country who, during the life-time of the Dean, had paid their addresses to Cecilia, again waited upon her at Mrs. Charlton's, and renewed their proposals. They had now, however, still less chance of success, and their dismission was brief and decisive.

Among these came Mr. Biddulph; and to him Cecilia was involuntarily most civil, because she knew him to be the friend of Delvile. Yet his conversation encreased the uneasiness of her suspense; for after speaking of the family in general which she had left, he enquired more particularly concerning Delvile, and then added, "I am, indeed, greatly grieved to find, by all the accounts I receive of him, that he is now in a very bad state of health."

This speech gave her fresh subject for apprehension; and in proportion as the silence of Mrs. Delvile grew more alarming, her regard for her favourite Fidel became more partial. The affectionate animal seemed to mourn the loss of his master, and while sometimes she indulged herself in fancifully telling him her fears, she imagined she read in his countenance the faithfullest sympathy.

One week of her minority was now all that remained, and she was soon wholly occupied in preparations for coming of age. She purposed taking possession of a large house that had belonged to her uncle, which was situated only three miles from that of Mrs. Charlton; and she employed herself in giving orders for fitting it up, and in hearing complaints, and promising indulgencies, to various of her tenants.

At this time, while she was at breakfast one morning, a letter arrived from Mrs. Delvile. She apologised for not writing sooner, but added that various family occurrences, which had robbed her of all leisure, might easily be imagined, when she acquainted her that Mortimer had determined upon again going abroad. . . . . They were all, she said, returned to Delvile Castle, but mentioned nothing either of the health of her son, or of her own regret, and filled up the rest of her letter with general news, and ex-

pressions of kindness: though, in a postscript, was inserted, "We have lost our poor Fidel."

Cecilia was still meditating upon this letter, by which her perplexity how to act was rather encreased than diminished, when, to her great surprise, Lady Honoria Pemberton was announced. She hastily begged one of the Miss Charltons to convey Fidel out of sight, from a dread of her raillery, should she, at last, be unconcerned in the transaction, and then went to receive her.

Lady Honoria, who was with her governess, gave a brief history of her quitting Delvile Castle, and said she was now going with her father to visit a noble family in Norfolk: but she had obtained his permission to leave him at the inn where they had slept, in order to make a short excursion to Bury, for the pleasure of seeing Miss Beverley.

"And therefore," she continued, "I can stay but half an hour; so you must give me some account of yourself as fast as possible."

"What account does your ladyship require?"

"Why, who you live with here, and who are your companions, and what you do with yourself."

"Why, I live with Mrs. Charlton; and for companions, I have at least a score; here are her two grand-daughters, and Mrs. and Miss ——"

"Pho, pho," interrupted Lady Honoria, "but I don't mean such hum-drum companions as those; you'll tell me next, I suppose, of the parson, and his wife and three daughters, with all their cousins and aunts: I hate those sort of people. What I desire to hear of is, who are your particular favourites; and whether you take long walks here, as you used to do at the castle, and who you have to accompany you." And then, looking at her very archly, she added, "A pretty little dog, now, I should think, would be vastly agreeable in such a place as this.—Ah, Miss Beverley, you have not left off that trick of colouring, I see!"

"If I colour now," said Cecilia, fully convinced of the justness of her suspicions, "I think it must be for your ladyship, not myself; for, if I am not much mistaken, either in person, or by proxy, a blush from Lady Honoria Pemberton would not, just now, be wholly out of season."

"Lord," cried she, "how like that is to a speech of Mrs. Delvile's! She has taught you exactly her manner of talking. But do you know I am informed you have got Fidel with you here? O fie, Miss Beverley! What will papa and mamma say, when they find you have taken away poor little master's play-thing?"

"And O fie, Lady Honoria! what shall *I* say, when I find you guilty of this mischievous frolic! I must beg, however, since you have gone thus far, that you will proceed a little farther, and send back the dog to the person from whom you received him."

"No, not I! manage him all your own way: if you choose to accept dogs from gentlemen, you know, it is your affair, and not mine."

"If you really will not return him yourself, you must at least pardon me should you hear that I do in your ladyship's name."

Lady Honoria for some time only laughed and rallied, without coming to any explanation; but when she had exhausted all the sport she could make, she frankly owned that she had herself ordered the dog to be privately stolen, and then sent a man with him to Mrs. Charlton's.

"But you know," she continued, "I really owed you a spite for being so ill-natured as to run away after sending me to call Mortimer to comfort and take leave of you."

"Do you dream, Lady Honoria? when did I send you?"

"Why you know you looked as if you wished it, and that was the same thing. But really it made me appear excessively silly, when I had forced him to come back with me, and told him you were waiting for him,—to see nothing of you at all, and not be able to find or trace you. He took it all for my own invention."

"And was it *not* your own invention?"

"Why that's nothing to the purpose; I wanted him to believe you sent me, for I knew else he would not come."

"Your ladyship was a great deal too good!"

"Why now suppose I had brought you together, what possible harm could have happened from it? It would merely have given each of you some notion of a fever and ague; for first you would both have been hot, and then you would both have been cold, and then you would both

have turned red, and then you would both have turned white, and then you would both have pretended to simper at the trick; and then there would have been an end of it."

"This is a very easy way of settling it all," cried Cecilia, laughing; "however, you must be content to abide by your own theft, for you cannot in conscience expect I should take it upon myself."

"You are terribly ungrateful, I see," said her ladyship, "for all the trouble and contrivance and expense I have been at merely to oblige you, while the whole time poor Mortimer, I dare say, has had his sweet pet advertised in all the newspapers, and cried in every market-town in the kingdom. By the way, if you do send him back, I would advise you to let your man demand the reward that has been offered for him, which may serve in part of payment for his travelling expences."

Cecilia could only shake her head, and recollect Mrs. Delvile's expression, that her levity was incorrigible.

"O, if you had seen," she continued, "how sheepish Mortimer looked when I told him you were dying to see him before he set off! He coloured so!—just as you do now!—but I think you're vastly alike."

"I fear, then," cried Cecilia, not very angry at this speech, "there is but little chance your ladyship should like either of us."

"O yes, I do! I like odd people of all things."

"Odd people! and in what are we so very odd?"

"O, in a thousand things. You're so good, you know, and so grave, and so squeamish."

"Squeamish? how?"

"Why, you know, you never laugh at the old folks, and never fly at your servants, nor smoke people before their faces, and are so civil to all the old *fograms*, you would make one imagine you liked nobody so well. By the way, I could do no good with my little Lord Derford; he pretended to find out I was only laughing at him, and so he minded nothing I told him. I dare say, however, his father made the detection, for I am sure he had not wit enough to discover it himself."

Cecilia then very seriously began to entreat that she would return the dog herself, and confess her frolic, re-

monstrating in strong terms upon the mischievous tendency and consequences of such inconsiderate flights.

"Well," cried she, rising, "this is all vastly true; but I have no time to hear any more of it just now; besides, it's only forestalling my next lecture from Mrs. Delvile, for you talk so much alike, that it is really very perplexing to me to remember which is which."

She then hurried away, protesting she had already outstayed her father's patience, and declaring the delay of another minute, would occasion half a dozen expresses to know whether she was gone towards Scotland or Flanders.

This visit, however, was both pleasant and consolatory to Cecilia; who was now relieved from her suspense, and revived in her spirits, by the intelligence that Delvile had no share in sending her a present, which, from him, would have been humiliating and impertinent. She regretted, indeed, that she had not instantly returned it to the castle, which she was now convinced was the measure she ought to have pursued; but to make all possible reparation, she determined that her own servant should set out with it the next morning to Bristol, and take a letter to Mrs. Delvile to explain what had happened, since to conceal it from any delicacy to Lady Honoria, would be to expose herself to suspicions the most mortifying, for which that gay and careless young lady would never thank her.

She gave orders, therefore, to her servant to get ready for the journey.

When she communicated these little transactions to Mrs. Charlton, that kind-hearted old lady, who knew her fondness for Fidel, advised her not yet to part with him, but merely to acquaint Mrs. Delvile where he was, and what Lady Honoria had done, and, by leaving to herself the care of settling his restoration, to give her, at least, an opportunity of offering him to her acceptance.

Cecilia, however, would listen to no such proposal; she saw the firmness of Delvile in his resolution to avoid her, and knew that policy, as well as propriety, made it necessary she should part with what she could only retain to remind her of one whom she now most wished to forget.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INCIDENT.

THE spirits of Cecilia, however, internally failed her: she considered her separation from Delvile to be now, in all probability, for life, since she saw that no struggle either of interest, inclination, or health, could bend him from his purpose; his mother, too, seemed to regard his name and his existence as equally valuable, and the scruples of his father she was certain would be still more insurmountable. Her own pride, excited by theirs, made her, indeed, with more anger than sorrow, see this general consent to abandon her; but pride and anger both failed when she considered the situation of his health; sorrow, there, took the lead, and admitted no partner: it represented him to her not only as lost to herself, but to the world; and so sad grew her reflections, and so heavy her heart, that, to avoid from Mrs. Charlton observations which pained her, she stole into a summer-house in the garden the moment she had done tea, declining any companion but her affectionate Fidel.

Her tenderness and her sorrow found here a romantic consolation, in complaining to him of the absence of his master, his voluntary exile, and her fears for his health: calling upon him to participate in her sorrow, and lamenting that even this little relief would soon be denied her; and that in losing Fidel no vestige of Mortimer, but in her own breast, would remain: "Go, then, dear Fidel," she cried, "carry back to your master all that nourishes his remembrance! Bid him not love you the less for having some time belonged to Cecilia; but never may his proud heart be fed with the vain-glory of knowing how fondly for his sake she has cherished you! Go, dear Fidel, guard him by night, and follow him by day; serve him with zeal, and love him with fidelity:—Oh, that his health were invincible as his pride!—there, alone, is he vulnerable—"

Here Fidel, with a loud barking, suddenly sprang away

from her, and, as she turned her eyes towards the door to see what had thus startled him, she beheld standing there, as if immovable, young Delvile himself!

Her astonishment at this sight almost bereft her of her understanding; it appeared to her supernatural, and she rather believed it was his ghost than himself. Fixed in mute wonder, she stood still, though terrified, her eyes almost bursting from their sockets to be satisfied if what they saw was real.

Delvile, too, was some time speechless; he looked not at her, indeed, with any doubt of her existence, but as if what he had heard was to him as amazing as to her what she saw. At length, however, tormented by the dog, who jumpt up to him, licked his hands, and by his rapturous joy forced himself into notice, he was moved to return his caresses, saying, "Yes, *dear Fidel!* you have a claim indeed to my attention, and with the fondest gratitude will I cherish you ever!"

At the sound of his voice, Cecilia again began to breathe; and Delvile having quieted the dog, now entered the summer-house, saying, as he advanced, "Is this possible!—am I not in a dream?—Good God! is it indeed possible!"

The consternation of doubt and astonishment which had seized every faculty of Cecilia, now changed into certainty that Delvile indeed was present; all her recollection returned as she listened to this question, and the wild rambling of fancy with which she had incautiously indulged her sorrow, rushing suddenly upon her mind, she felt herself wholly overpowered by consciousness and shame, and sunk, almost fainting, upon a window-seat.

Delvile instantly flew to her, penetrated with gratitude, and filled with wonder and delight, which, however i[redacted] nally combated by sensations less pleasant, were [redacted] for control, and he poured forth at her fe[redacted] passionate acknowledgments.

Cecilia, surprised, affected, and trembling wi[redacted] emotions, endeavoured to break from him an[redacted] eagerly detaining her, "No, loveliest Miss Be[redacted] cried, "not thus must we now part! this m[redacted] have I discovered what a treasure I was leavin[redacted] for Fidel, I had quitted it in ignorance for eve[redacted]

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, in the extremest agitation, "indeed you may believe me, Fidel is here quite by accident.—Lady Honoria took him away,—I knew nothing of the matter,—she stole him, she sent him, she did everything herself."

"O, kind Lady Honoria!" cried Delvile, more and more delighted, "how shall I ever thank her!—and did she also tell you to caress and to cherish him?—to talk to him of his master——"

"O, heaven!" interrupted Cecilia, in an agony of mortification and shame, "to what has my unguarded folly reduced me!" Then again endeavouring to break from him, "Leave me, Mr. Delvile," she cried, "leave me, or let me pass!—never can I see you more!—never bear you again in my sight!"

"Come, *dear Fidel!*" cried he, still detaining her, "come and plead for your master! come and ask in his name who *now* has a proud heart, whose pride *now* is invincible!"

"Oh, go!" cried Cecilia, looking away from him while she spoke, "repeat not those hateful words, if you wish me not to detest myself eternally!"

"Ever-lovely Miss Beverley," cried he, more seriously, "why this resentment? why all this causeless distress? has not *my* heart long since been known to you? have you not witnessed its sufferings, and been assured of its tenderness? why, then, this untimely reserve? this unabating coldness? Oh why try to rob me of the felicity you have inadvertently given me! and to sour the happiness of a moment that recompenses such exquisite misery!"

"Oh, Mr. Delvile!" cried she, impatiently, though half softened, "was this honourable, or right, to steal upon me thus privately—to listen to me thus secretly—"

[redacted]blame me," cried he, "too soon; your own friend, [redacted]on, permitted me to come hither in search of [redacted] indeed, when I heard the sound of your voice [redacted]ard that voice talk of *Fidel*—of his *master*——"

[redacted]p, stop!" cried she; "I cannot support the [redacted]! there is no punishment, indeed, which my [redacted]retion does not merit,—but I shall have sufficient [redacted]rness of self-reproach!"

[redacted]ill you talk thus, my beloved Miss Beverley?

what have you done,—what, let me ask, have *I* done, that such infinite disgrace and depression should follow this little sensibility to a passion so fervent? Does it not render you more dear to me than ever? does it not add new life, new vigour, to the devotion by which I am bound to you?"

"No, no," cried the mortified Cecilia, who from the moment she found herself betrayed, believed herself to be lost, "far other is the effect it will have! and the same mad folly by which I am ruined in my own esteem, will ruin me in yours!—I cannot endure to think of it!—Why will you persist in detaining me?—You have filled me with anguish and mortification,—you have taught me the bitterest of lessons, that of hating and contemning myself!"

"Good heaven!" cried he, much hurt, "what strange apprehensions thus terrify you? are you with me less safe than with yourself? is it my honour you doubt? is it my integrity you fear? Surely I cannot be so little known to you; and to make protestations now, would but give a new alarm to a delicacy already too agitated.—Else would I tell you that more sacred than my life will I hold what I have heard, that the words just now graven on my heart, shall remain there to eternity unseen; and that higher than ever, not only in my love, but my esteem, is the beautiful speaker—"

"Ah, no!" cried Cecilia, with a sigh, "that at least is impossible, for lower than ever is she sunk from deserving it!"

"No," cried he, with fervour, "she is raised, she is exalted! I find her more excellent and perfect than I had even dared believe her; I discover new virtues in the spring of every action; I see what I took for indifference, was dignity; I perceive what I imagined the most rigid insensibility, was noblenesss, was propriety, was true greatness of mind!"

Cecilia was somewhat appeased by this speech; and, after a little hesitation, she said with a half smile, "Must I thank you for this good-nature, in seeking to reconcile me with myself?—or shall I quarrel with you for flattery, in giving me praise you can so little think I merit?"

"Ah!" cried he, "were I to praise as I think of you! were my language permitted to accord with my opinion of your worth, you would not then simply call me a flatterer,

you would tell me I was an idolater, and fear at least for my principles, if not for my understanding."

"I shall have but little right, however," said Cecilia, again rising, "to arraign your understanding while I act as if bereft of my own. Now, at least, let me pass; indeed you will greatly displease me by any further opposition."

"Will you suffer me, then, to see you early to-morrow morning?"

"No, sir; nor the next morning, nor the morning after that! This meeting has been wrong, another would be worse; in this I have accusation enough for folly;—in another the charge would be far more heavy."

"Does Miss Beverley, then," cried he, gravely, "think me capable of desiring to see her for mere selfish gratification? of intending to trifle either with her time or her feelings? No; the conference I desire will be important and decisive. This night I shall devote solely to deliberation; to-morrow shall be given to action. Without some thinking I dare venture at no plan;—I presume not to communicate to you the various interests that divide me, but the result of them all I can take no denial to your hearing."

Cecilia, who felt, when thus stated, the justice of his request, now opposed it no longer, but insisted upon his instantly departing.

"True," cried he, "I must go!—the longer I stay, the more I am fascinated, and the weaker are those reasoning powers of which I now want the strongest exertion." He then repeated his professions of eternal regard, besought her not to regret the happiness she had given him, and, after disobeying her injunctions of going till she was seriously displeased, he only staid to obtain her pardon, and permission to be early the next morning, and then, though still slowly and reluctantly, he left her.

Scarce was Cecilia again alone, but the whole of what had passed seemed a vision of her imagination. That Delvile should be at Bury, that he should visit her at Mrs. Charlton's, surprise her by herself, and discover her most secret thoughts, appeared so strange and so incredible, that occupied rather by wonder than thinking, she continued almost motionless in the place where he had left her, till Mrs. Charlton sent to request that she would return to the

house. She then enquired if any body was with her, and being answered in the negative, obeyed the summons.

Mrs. Charlton, with a smile of much meaning, hoped she had had a pleasant walk; but Cecilia seriously remonstrated on the dangerous imprudence she had committed in suffering her to be so unguardedly surprised. Mrs. Charlton, however, more anxious for her future and solid happiness, than for her present apprehensions and delicacy, repented not the step she had taken; and when she gathered from Cecilia the substance of what had past, unmindful of the expostulations which accompanied it, she thought with exultation that the sudden meeting she had permitted, would now, by making known to each their mutual affection, determine them to defer no longer a union upon which their mutual peace of mind so much depended. And Cecilia, finding she had been thus betrayed designedly, not inadvertently, could hardly reproach her zeal, though she lamented its indiscretion.

She then asked by what means he had obtained admission, and made himself known; and heard that he had enquired at the door for Miss Beverley, and having sent in his name, was shown into the parlour, where Mrs. Charlton, much pleased with his appearance, had suddenly conceived the little plan which he had executed, of contriving a surprise for Cecilia, from which she rationally expected the very consequences that ensued, though the immediate means she had not conjectured.

The account was still unsatisfactory to Cecilia, who could frame to herself no possible reason for a visit so extraordinary, and so totally inconsistent with his declarations and resolutions.

This, however, was a matter but of little moment, compared with the other subjects to which the interview had given rise: Delvile, upon whom so long, though secretly, her dearest hopes of happiness had rested, was now become acquainted with his power, and knew himself the master of her destiny; he had quitted her avowedly to decide what it should be, since his present subject of deliberation included her fate in his own; the next morning he was to call and acquaint her with his decree, not doubting her concurrence whichever way he resolved.

A subjection so undue, and which she could not but consider as disgraceful, both shocked and afflicted her; and the reflection that the man who of all men she preferred, was acquainted with her preference, yet hesitated whether to accept or abandon her, mortified or provoked her alternately, occupied her thoughts the whole night, and kept her from peace and from rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSITION.

EARLY the next morning, Delvile again made his appearance. Cecilia, who was at breakfast with Mrs. and Miss Charltons, received him with the most painful confusion, and he was evidently himself in a state of the utmost perturbation. Mrs. Charlton made a pretence almost immediately for sending away both her grand-daughters, and then, without taking the trouble of devising one for herself, arose and followed them, though Cecilia made sundry signs of solicitation that she would stay.

Finding herself now alone with him, she hastily, and without knowing what she said, cried, "How is Mrs. Delvile, sir? Is she still at Bristol?"

"At Bristol? no; have you never heard she is returned to Delvile-Castle?"

"O, true!—I meant Delvile Castle,—but I hope she found some benefit from the waters?"

"She had not, I believe, any occasion to try them."

Cecilia, ashamed of these two following mistakes, coloured high, but ventured not again to speak: and Delvile, who seemed big with something he feared to utter, arose, and walked for a few instants about the room; after which, exclaiming aloud, "How vain is every plan which passes the present hour!" He advanced to Cecilia, who pretended to be looking at some work, and seating himself next her, "when we parted yesterday," he cried, "I presumed to say one night alone should be given to deliberation,—and to-

day, this very day to action!—but I forgot that though in deliberating I had only myself to consult, in acting I was not so independent; and that when my own doubts were satisfied, and my own resolutions taken, other doubts and other resolutions must be considered, by which my purposed proceedings might be retarded, might perhaps be wholly prevented!"

He paused, but Cecilia, unable to conjecture to what he was leading, made not any answer.

"Upon you, madam," he continued, "all that is good or evil of my future life, as far as relates to its happiness or misery, will, from this very hour, almost solely depend: yet much as I rely upon your goodness, and superior as I know you to trifling or affectation, what I now come to propose—to petition—to entreat—I cannot summon courage to mention, from a dread of alarming you!"

"What next," thought Cecilia, trembling at this introduction, "is preparing for me! does he mean to ask *me* to solicit Mrs. Delvile's consent! or from myself must he receive commands that we should never meet more!"

"Is Miss Beverley," cried he, "determined not to speak to me? Is she bent upon silence only to intimidate me? Indeed if she knew how greatly I respect her, she would honour me with more confidence."

"When, sir," cried she, "do you mean to make your tour?"

"Never!" cried he, with fervour, "unless banished by *you*, never!—no, loveliest, Miss Beverley, I can now quit you no more! Fortune, beauty, worth and sweetness I had power to relinquish, and severe as was the task, I compelled myself to perform it,—but when to these I find joined so attractive a softness,—a pity for my sufferings so unexpectedly gentle——no! sweetest Miss Beverley, I can quit you no more!" And then, seizing her hand, with yet greater energy, he went on, "I here," he cried, "offer you my vows, I here own you sole arbitress of my fate! I give you not merely the possession of my heart,—that, indeed, I had no power to with-hold from you,—but I give you the direction of my conduct, I entreat you to become my counsellor and guide. Will Miss Beverley accept such an office? Will she deign to listen to such a prayer?"

"Yes," cried Cecilia, involuntarily delighted to find that such was the result of his night's deliberation, "I am most ready to give you my counsel; which I now do,—that you set off for the continent to-morrow morning."

"O, how malicious!" cried he, half laughing, "yet not so immediately do I even request your counsel; something must first be done to qualify you for giving it: penetration, skill and understanding, however amply you possess them, are not sufficient to fit you for the charge; something still more is requisite, you must be invested with fuller powers; you must have a right less disputable, and a title, that not alone inclination, not even judgment alone must sanctify, —but which law must enforce, and rites the most solemn support?"

"I think, then," said Cecilia, deeply blushing, "I must be content to forbear giving any counsel at all, if the qualifications for it are so difficult of acquirement."

"Resent not my presumption," cried he, "my beloved Miss Beverley, but let the severity of my recent sufferings palliate my present temerity; for where affliction has been deep and serious, causeless and unnecessary misery will find little encouragement; and mine has been serious indeed! Sweetly, then, permit me, in proportion to its bitterness, to rejoice in the soft reverse which now flatters me with its approach."

Cecilia, abashed and uneasy, uncertain of what was to follow, and unwilling to speak till more assured, paused, and then abruptly exclaimed, "I am afraid Mrs. Charlton is waiting for me," and would have hurried away: but Delvile, almost forcibly preventing her, compelled her to stay; and after a short conversation, on his side the most impassioned, and on hers the most confused, obtained from her, what, indeed, after the surprise of the preceding evening she could but ill deny, a frank confirmation of his power over her heart, and an ingenuous, though reluctant acknowledgment, how long he had possessed it.

This confession, made, as affairs now stood, wholly in opposition to her judgment, was torn from her by an impetuous urgency which she had not presence of mind to resist, and with which Delvile, when particularly animated, had long been accustomed to overpower all opposition.

The joy with which he heard it, though but little mixed with wonder, was as violent as the eagerness with which he had sought it; yet it was not of long duration, a sudden and most painful recollection presently quelled it, and even in the midst of his rapturous acknowledgments, seemed to strike him to the heart.

Cecilia, soon perceiving both in his countenance and manner an alteration that shocked her, bitterly repented an avowal she could never recall, and looked aghast with expectation and dread.

Delvile, who with quickness saw a change of expression in her of which in himself he was unconscious, exclaimed, with much emotion, "Oh, how transient is human felicity! How rapidly fly those rare and exquisite moments in which it is perfect! Ah! sweetest Miss Beverley, what words shall I find to soften what I have now to reveal! to tell you that after goodness, candour, generosity such as yours, a request, a supplication remains yet to be uttered that banishes me, if refused, from your presence for ever!"

Cecilia, extremely dismayed, desired to know what it was: an evident dread of offending her kept him some time from proceeding; but at length, after repeatedly expressing his fears of her disapprobation, and a repugnance even on his own part to the very measure he was obliged to urge, he acknowledged that all his hopes of being ever united to her, rested upon obtaining her consent to an immediate and secret marriage.

Cecilia, thunderstruck by this declaration, remained for a few instants too much confounded to speak; but when he was beginning an explanatory apology, she started up, and glowing with indignation, said, "I had flattered myself, sir, that both my character and my conduct, independent of my situation in life, would have exempted me at all times from a proposal which I shall ever think myself degraded by having heard."

And then she was again going, but Delvile still preventing her, said, "I knew too well how much you would be alarmed, and such was my dread of your displeasure that it had power even to embitter the happiness I sought with so much earnestness, and to render your condescension insufficient to ensure it. Yet wonder not at my scheme; wild

as it may appear, it is the result of deliberation; and censurable as it may seem, it springs not from unworthy motives."

"Whatever may be your motives with respect to yourself, sir," said Cecilia, "with respect to me they must certainly be disgraceful; I will not, therefore, listen to them."

"You wrong me cruelly," cried he, with warmth, "and a moment's reflection must tell you that however distinct may be our honour or our disgrace in every other instance, in that by which we should be united, they must inevitably be the same: and far sooner would I voluntarily relinquish you, than be myself accessary to tainting that delicacy of which the unsullied purity has been the chief source of my admiration."

"Why, then," cried Cecilia, reproachfully, "have you mentioned to me such a project?"

"Circumstances the most singular, and necessity the most unavoidable," he answered, "should alone have ever tempted me to form it. No longer ago than yesterday morning, I believed myself incapable of even wishing it; but extraordinary situations call for extraordinary resolutions, and in private as well as public life, palliate, at least, extraordinary actions. Alas! the proposal which so much offends you is my final resource! it is the sole barrier between myself and perpetual misery!—the only expedient in my power to save me from eternally parting with you!—for I am now cruelly compelled to confess, that my family, I am certain, will never consent to our union!"

"Neither, then, sir," cried Cecilia, with great spirit, "will I! The disdain I may meet with I pretend not to retort, but wilfully to encounter, were meanly to deserve it. I will enter into no family in opposition to its wishes, I will consent to no alliance that may expose me to indignity. Nothing is so contagious as contempt!—The example of your friends might work powerfully upon yourself, and who shall dare assure me you would not catch the infection?"

"*I* dare assure you!" cried he; "hasty you may perhaps think me, and somewhat impetuous I cannot deny myself; but believe me not of so wretched a character as to be capable, in any affair of moment, of fickleness or caprice."

"But what, sir, is my security to the contrary? Have you not this moment avowed that but yesterday you held

in abhorrence the very plan that to-day you propose? And may you not to-morrow resume again the same opinion?"

"Cruel Miss Beverley! how unjust is this inference! If yesterday I disapproved what to-day I recommend, a little recollection must surely tell you why, and that not my opinion, but my situation is changed."

The conscious Cecilia here turned away her head; too certain he alluded to the discovery of her partiality.

"Have you not yourself," he continued, "witnessed the steadiness of my mind? Have you not beheld me fly, when I had power to pursue, and avoid, when I had opportunity to seek you? After witnessing my constancy upon such trying occasions, is it equitable, is it right to suspect me of wavering?"

"But what," cried she, "was the constancy which brought you into Suffolk?—When all occasion was over for our meeting any more, when you told me you were going abroad, and took leave of me for-ever,—where, then, was your steadiness in this unnecessary journey?"

"Have a care," cried he, half smiling, and taking a letter from his pocket, "have a care, upon this point, how you provoke me to show my justification!"

"Ah!" cried Cecilia, blushing, "'tis some trick of Lady Honoria!"

"No, upon my honour. The authority is less doubtful: I believe I should hardly else have regarded it."

Cecilia, much alarmed, held out her hand for the letter; and looking first at the end was much astonished to see the name of Biddulph. She then cast her eye over the beginning, and when she saw her own name, read the following paragraph.

"Miss Beverley, as you doubtless know, is returned into Suffolk; everybody here saw her with the utmost surprise; from the moment I had heard of her residence in Delvile-Castle, I had given her up for lost: but, upon her unexpected appearance among us again, I was weak enough once more to make trial of her heart. I soon found, however, that the pain of a second rejection *you* might have spared me, and that though she had quitted Delvile Castle, she had not for nothing entered it: at the sound of your

name, she blushes; at the mention of your illness, she turns pale; and the dog you have given her, which I recollected immediately, is her darling companion. Oh, happy Delvile! yet so lovely a conquest you abandon——"

Cecilia could read no more; the letter dropt from her hand: to find herself thus by her own emotions betrayed, made her instantly conclude she was universally discovered: and turning sick at the supposition, all her spirit forsook her, and she burst into tears.

"Good heaven!" cried Delvile, extremely shocked, "what has thus affected you? Can the jealous surmises of an apprehensive rival——"

"Do not talk to me," interrupted she, impatiently, "and do not detain me,—I am extremely disturbed,——I wish to be alone,—I beg, I even entreat you would leave me."

"I will go, I will obey you in everything!" cried he, eagerly, "tell me but when I may return, and when you will suffer me to explain to you all the motives of my proposal?"

"Never, never!" cried she, with earnestness, "I am sufficiently lowered already, but never will I intrude myself into a family that disdains me!"

"Disdains? No, you are revered in it! who could disdain you! That fatal clause alone——"

"Well, well, pray leave me; indeed I cannot hear you; I am unfit for argument, and all reasoning now is nothing less than cruelty."

"I am gone," cried he, "this moment! I would not even wish to take advantage of your agitation in order to work upon your sensibility. My desire is not to surprise, but to reconcile you to my plan. What is it I seek in Miss Beverley? An heiress? No, as such she has seen I could resist her; nor yet the light trifler of a spring or two, neglected when no longer a novelty; no, no!—it is a companion for ever, it is a solace for every care, it is a bosom friend through every period of life that I seek in Miss Beverley! Her esteem, therefore, to me is as precious as her affection, for how can I hope her friendship in the winter of my days, if their brighter and gayer season is darkened by doubts of my integrity? All shall be clear and explicit; no latent cause of uneasiness shall disturb our future quiet: we will

now be sincere, that hereafter we may be easy; and sweetly in unclouded felicity, time shall glide away imperceptibly, and we will make an interest with each other in the gaiety of youth, to bear with the infirmities of age, and alleviate them by kindness and sympathy. And then shall my soothing Cecilia—"

"O, say no more!" interrupted she, softened in her own despite by a plan so consonant to her wishes, "what language is this! how improper for you to use, or me to hear!"

She then very earnestly insisted upon his going; and after a thousand times taking leave and returning, promising obedience, yet pursuing his own way, he at length said if she would consent to receive a letter from him, he would endeavour to commit what he had to communicate to paper, since their mutual agitation made him unable to explain himself with clearness, and rather hurt his cause than assisted it, by leaving all his arguments unfinished and obscure.

Another dispute now arose; Cecilia protesting she would receive no letter, and hear nothing upon the subject; and Delvile impetuously declaring he would submit to no award without being first heard. At length he conquered, and at length he departed.

Cecilia then felt her whole heart sink within her at the unhappiness of her situation. She considered herself now condemned to refuse Delvile herself, as the only condition upon which he even solicited her favour neither the strictness of her principles nor the delicacy of her mind, would suffer her to accept. Her displeasure at the proposal had been wholly unaffected, and she regarded it as an injury to her character ever to have received it; yet that Delvile's pride of heart should give way to his passion, that he should love her with so much fondness as to relinquish for her the ambitious schemes of his family, and even that darling name which so lately seemed annexed to his existence, were circumstances to which she was not insensible, and proofs of tenderness and regard which she had thought incompatible with the general spirit of his disposition. Yet however by these she was gratified, she resolved never to comply with so humiliating a measure, but to wait the consent of his friends, or renounce him for-ever.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER.

AS soon as Mrs. Charlton was acquainted with the departure of young Delvile, she returned to Cecilia, impatient to be informed what had passed. The narration she heard both hurt and astonished her; that Cecilia, the heiress of such a fortune, the possessor of so much beauty, descended of a worthy family, and formed and educated to grace a noble one, should be rejected by people to whom her wealth would be most useful, and only in secret have their alliance proposed to her, she deemed an indignity that called for nothing but resentment, and approved and enforced the resolution of her young friend to resist all solicitations which Mr. and Mrs. Delvile did not second themselves.

About two hours after Delvile was gone, his letter arrived. Cecilia opened it with trepidation, and read as follows:

To Miss Beverley.

September 20, 1779.

What could be the apprehensions, the suspicions of Miss Beverley when so earnestly she prohibited my writing? From a temper so unguarded as mine, could she fear any subtlety of doctrine? Is my character so little known to her, that she can think me capable of craft or duplicity? Had I even the desire, I have neither the address nor the patience to practise them; no, loveliest Miss Beverley,

though sometimes by vehemence I may incautiously offend, by sophistry, believe me, I never shall injure: my ambition, as I have told you, is to convince, not beguile, and my arguments shall be simple as my professions shall be sincere.

Yet how again may I venture to mention a proposal which so lately almost before you had heard you rejected? Suffer me, however, to assure you it resulted neither from insensibility to your delicacy, nor to my own duty; I made it, on the contrary, with that reluctance and timidity which were given me by an apprehension that both seemed to be offended by it:—but, alas! already I have said what with grief I must repeat, I have no resource, no alternative, between receiving the honour of your hand in secret, or foregoing you for ever.

You will wonder, you may well wonder at such a declaration; and again that severe renunciation with which you wounded me, will tremble on your lips.—Oh, there let it stop! nor let the air again be agitated with sounds so discordant!

In that cruel and heart-breaking moment when I tore myself from you at Delvile Castle, I confessed to you the reason of my flight, and I determined to see you no more. I named not to you, then, my family, the potency of my own objections against daring to solicit your favour rendering theirs immaterial: my own are now wholly removed, —but their's remain in full force.

My father, descended of a race which though decaying in wealth, is unsubdued in pride, considers himself as the guardian of the honour of his house, to which he holds the name of his ancestors inseparably annexed: my mother, born of the same family, and bred to the same ideas, has strengthened this opinion by giving it the sanction of her own.

Such being their sentiments, you will not, madam, be surprised that their only son, the sole inheritor of their fortune, and sole object of their expectations, should early have admitted the same. Indeed almost the first lesson I was taught was that of reverencing the family from which I am descended, and the name to which I am born. I was bid consider myself as its only remaining support, and

sedulously instructed neither to act nor think but with a view to its aggrandizement and dignity.

Thus, unchecked by ourselves, and uncontrolled by the world, this haughty self-importance acquired by time a strength, and by mutual encouragement a firmness, which Miss Beverley alone could possibly, I believe, have shaken! What, therefore, was my secret alarm, when first I was conscious of the force of her attractions, and found my mind wholly occupied with admiration of her excellencies! All that pride could demand, and all to which ambition could aspire, all that happiness could covet, or the most scrupulous delicacy exact, in her I found united; and while my heart was enslaved by her charms, my understanding exulted in its fetters.——Yet, to forfeit my name, to give up for ever a family which upon me rested its latest expectations,——Honour, I thought forbad it, propriety and manly spirit revolted at the sacrifice. The renunciation of my birth-right seemed a desertion of the post in which I was stationed: I forbore, therefore, even in my wishes, to solicit your favour, and vigorously determined to fly you as dangerous to my peace, because unattainable without dishonour.

Such was the intended regulation of my conduct at the time I received Biddulph's letter: in three days I was to leave England; my father, with much persuasion, had consented to my departure; my mother, who penetrated into my motives, had never opposed it: but how great was the change wrought upon my mind by reading that letter! my steadiness forsook me, my resolution wavered; yet I thought him deceived, and attributed his suspicions to jealousy: but still, Fidel I knew was missing—and to hear he was your darling companion——was it possible to quit England in a state of such uncertainty? to be harassed in distant climates with conjectures I might then never satisfy? No; I told my friends I must visit Biddulph before I left the kingdom, and promising to return to them in three or four days, I hastily set out for Suffolk, and rested not till I arrived at Mrs. Charlton's.

What a scene there awaited me! to behold the loved mistress of my heart, the opposed, yet resistless object of my fondest admiration, caressing an animal she knew to be

mine, mourning over him his master's ill health, and sweetly recommending to him fidelity!——Ah! forgive the retrospection, I will dwell on it no longer. Little, indeed, had I imagined with what softness the dignity of Miss Beverley was blended, though always conscious that her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect lustre upon the highest station to which human grandeur could raise her, and would still be more exalted than her rank, though that were the most eminent upon earth.—And had there been a thousand, and ten thousand obstacles to oppose my addressing her, vigorously and undauntedly would I have combated with them all, in preference to yielding to this single objection.

Let not the frankness of this declaration irritate you, but rather let it serve to convince you of the sincerity of what follows: various as are the calamities of life which may render me miserable, YOU only, among even its chosen felicities, have power to make me happy. Fame, honours, wealth, ambition, were insufficient without you; all chance of internal peace, and every softer hope is now centered in your favour, and to lose you, from whatever cause, ensures me wretchedness unmitigated.

With respect therefore to myself, the die is finally cast, and the conflict between bosom felicity and family pride is deliberately over. This name which so vainly I have cherished and so painfully supported, I now find inadequate to recompense me for the sacrifice which its preservation requires. I part with it, I own, with regret that the surrender is necessary; yet it is rather an imaginary than an actual evil, and though a deep wound to pride, no offence to morality.

Thus have I laid open to you my whole heart, confessed my perplexities, acknowledged my vain-glory, and exposed with equal sincerity the sources of my doubts, and the motives of my decision: but now, indeed, how to proceed I know not; the difficulties which are yet to encounter I fear to enumerate, and the petition I have to urge I have scarce courage to mention.

My family, mistaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connection for me, which though my invariable repugnance has stopt any

advances, their wishes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I despair of success; I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command.

In a situation so desperate, what then remains? Must I make an application with a certainty of rejection, and then mock all authority by acting in defiance of it? Or, harder task yet! relinquish my dearest hopes when no longer persuaded of their impropriety? Ah! sweetest Miss Beverley, end the struggle at once! My happiness, my peace, are wholly in your power, for the moment of our union secures them for life!

It may seem to you strange that I should thus purpose to brave the friends whom I venture not to entreat; but from my knowledge of their characters and sentiments I am certain I have no other resource. Their favourite principles were too early imbibed to be now at this late season eradicated. Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is sacrificed, and even our virtue made subservient, what conviction can be offered by reason, to notions that exist but by prejudice? They have been cherished too long for rhetoric to remove them, they can only be expelled by all-powerful necessity. Life is, indeed, too brief, and success too precarious, to trust, in any case where happiness is concerned, the extirpation of deep-rooted and darling opinions, to the slow-working influence of argument and disquisition.

Yet bigotted as they are to rank and family, they adore Miss Beverley, and though their consent to the forfeiture of their name might for-ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their house, her elegance and accomplishments joined to the splendour of her fortune, would speedily make them forget the pride which now wholly absorb them. Their sense of honour is in nothing inferior to their sense of high birth; your condescension, therefore, would be felt by them in its fullest force, and though, during their first surprise, they might be irritated against their son, they would make it the study of their lives, that the lady who for him had done so much should never, through their means, repine for herself.

With regard to settlements, the privacy of our union would not affect them: one confidant we must unavoidably trust, and I would deposite in the hands of whatever person you would name, a bond by which I would engage myself to settle both your fortune and my own, according to the arbitration of our mutual friends.

The time for secrecy, though painful, would be short, and even from the altar, if you desired it, I would hasten to Delvile Castle. Not one of my friends should you see till they waited upon you themselves to solicit your presence at their house, till our residence elsewhere was fixed.

Oh, loveliest Cecilia, from a dream of a happiness so sweet awaken me not! from a plan of felicity so attractive turn not away! If one part of it is unpleasant, reject not therefore all; and since without some drawback no earthly bliss is attainable, do not, by a refinement too scrupulous for the short period of our existence, deny yourself that delight which your benevolence will afford you, in snatching from the pangs of unavailing regret and misery, the gratefullest of men in the

humblest and most devoted
of your servants,
Mortimer Delvile.

Cecilia read and re-read this letter, but with a perturbation of mind that made her little able to weigh its contents. Paragraph by paragraph her sentiments varied, and her determination was changed: the earnestness of his supplication now softened her into compliance, the acknowledged pride of his family now irritated her into resentment, and the confession of his own regret now sickened her into despondence. She meant in an immediate answer to have written a final dismission; but though proof against his entreaties, because not convinced by his arguments, there was something in the conclusion of his letter that staggered her resolution.

Those scruples and that refinement against which he warned her, she herself thought might be overstrained, and to gratify unnecessary punctilio, the short period of existence be rendered causelessly unhappy. He had truly said that their union would be no offence to morality; and with

respect merely to pride, why should that be spared? He knew he possessed her heart, she had long been certain of his, her character had early gained the affection of his mother, and the essential service which an income such as her's must do the family, would soon be felt too powerfully to make her connection with it regretted.

These reflections were so pleasant she knew not how to discard them; and the consciousness that her secret was betrayed not only to himself, but to Mr. Biddulph, Lord Ernolf, Lady Honoria Pemberton, and Mrs. Delvile, gave them additional force, by making it probable she was yet more widely suspected.

But still her delicacy and her principles revolted against a conduct of which the secrecy seemed to imply the impropriety. "How shall I meet Mrs. Delvile," cried she, "after an action so clandestine? How, after praise such as she has bestowed upon me, bear the severity of her eye, when she thinks I have seduced from her the obedience of her son! A son who is the sole solace and first hope of her existence, whose virtues make all her happiness, and whose filial piety is her only glory!—And well may she glory in a son such as Delvile! Nobly has he exerted himself in situations the most difficult, his family and his ideas of honour he has preferred to his peace and health, he has fulfilled with spirit and integrity the various, the conflicting duties of life. Even now, perhaps, in his present application, he may merely think himself bound by knowing me no longer free, and his generous sensibility to the weakness he has discovered, without any of the conviction to which he pretends, may have occasioned this proposal!"

A suggestion so mortifying again changed her determination; and the tears of Henrietta Belfield, with the letter which she had surprised in her hand recurring to her memory, all her thoughts turned once more upon rejecting him for-ever.

In this fluctuating state of mind she found writing impracticable; while uncertain what to wish, to decide was impossible. She disdained coquetry, she was superior to trifling, the candour and openness of Delvile had merited all her sincerity, and therefore while any doubt remained

with herself, she held it unworthy her character to tell him he had none.

Mrs. Charlton, upon reading the letter, became again the advocate of Delvile; the frankness with which he had stated his difficulties, assured her of his probity, and by explaining his former conduct, satisfied her with the rectitude of his future intentions. "Do not, therefore, my dear child," cried she, "become the parent of your own misery, by refusing him; he deserves you alike from his principles and his affection, and the task would both be long and melancholy to disengage him from your heart. I see not, however, the least occasion for the disgrace of a private marriage; I know not any family to which you would not be an honour, and those who feel not your merit, are little worth pleasing. Let Mr. Delvile, therefore, apply openly to his friends, and if they refuse their consent, be their prejudices their reward. You are freed from all obligations where caprice only can raise objections, and you may then, in the face of the world, vindicate your choice."

The wishes of Cecilia accorded with this advice, though the general tenour of Delvile's letter gave her little reason to expect he would follow it.

CHAPTER II.

A DISCUSSION.

THE day past away, and Cecilia had yet written no answer; the evening came, and her resolution was still unfixed. Delvile, at length, was again announced; and though she dreaded trusting herself to his entreaties, the necessity of hastening some decision deterred her from refusing to see him.

Mrs. Charlton was with her when he entered the room; he attempted at first some general conversation, though the anxiety of his mind was strongly pictured upon his face. Cecilia endeavoured also to talk upon common topics, though her evident embarrassment spoke the absence of her thoughts.

Delvile, at length, unable any longer to bear suspense,

turned to Mrs. Charlton, and said, "You are probably acquainted, madam, with the purport of the letter I had th honour of sending to Miss Beverley this morning?"

"Yes, sir," answered the old lady, "and you need desir little more than that her opinion of it may be as favourabl as mine."

Delvile bowed and thanked her; and looking at Cecilia to whom he ventured not to speak, he perceived in he countenance a mixture of dejection and confusion, that tol him whatever might be her opinion, it had by no mean encreased her happiness.

"But why, sir," said Mrs. Charlton, "should you thus sure of the disapprobation of your friends? had y not better hear what they have to say?"

"I *know*, madam, what they have to say," returned h "for their language and their principles have been inva able from my birth: to apply to them, therefore, for a c cession which I am certain they will not grant, were c a cruel device to lay all my misery to their account."

"And if they are so perverse, they deserve from nothing better," said Mrs. Charlton; "speak to them, h ever, you will then have done your duty; and if they obstinately unjust, you will have acquired a right to ac r yourself."

"To mock their authority," answered Delvile, "would be more offensive than to oppose it: to solicit their appro- bation, and then act in defiance of it, might justly provoke their indignation.—No; if at last I am reduced to appeal to them, by their decision I must abide."

To this Mrs. Charlton could make no answer, and in a few minutes she left the room.

"And is such, also," said Delvile, "the opinion of Miss Beverley? has she doomed me to be wretched, and does she wish that doom to be signed by my nearest friends!"

"If your friends, sir," said Cecilia, "are so undoubtedly inflexible, it were madness, upon any plan, to risk their displeasure."

"To entreaty," he answered, "they will be inflexible, but not to forgiveness. My father, though haughty, dearly, even passionately loves me; my mother, though high spirited, is just, noble, and generous. She is, indeed, th

most exalted of women, and her power over my mind I am unaccustomed to resist. Miss Beverley alone seems born to be her daughter—"

"No, no," interrupted Cecilia, "as her daughter she rejects me!"

"She loves, she adores you!" cried he, warmly; "and were I not certain she feels your excellencies as they ought to be felt, my veneration for you *both* should even yet spare you my present supplication. But you would become, I am certain, the first blessing of her life; in you she would behold all the felicity of her son,—his restoration to health, to his country, to his friends!"

"O, sir," cried Cecilia, with emotion, "how deep a trench of real misery do you sink, in order to raise this pile of fancied happiness! But I will not be responsible for your offending such a mother; scarcely can you honour her yourself more than I do; and I here declare most solemnly—"

"O, stop!" interrupted Delvile, "and resolve not till you have heard me. Would you, were she no more, were my father also no more, would you yet persist in refusing me?"

"Why should you ask me?" said Cecilia, blushing; "you would then be your own agent, and perhaps—"

She hesitated, and Delvile vehemently exclaimed, "Oh, make me not a monster! force me not to desire the death of the very beings by whom I live! weaken not the bonds of affection by which they are endeared to me, and compel me not to wish them no more as the sole barriers to my happiness!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Cecilia; "could I believe you so impious, I should suffer little indeed in desiring your eternal absence."

"Why then only upon their extinction must I rest my hope of your favour?"

Cecilia, staggered and distressed by this question, could make no answer. Delvile, perceiving her embarrassment, redoubled his urgency; and before she had power to recollect herself, she had almost consented to his plan, when Henrietta Belfield rushing in her memory, she hastily exclaimed, "One doubt there is, which I know not how to mention, but ought to have cleared up;—you are acquainted with—you remember Miss Belfield?"

"Certainly; but what of Miss Belfield that can raise a doubt in the mind of Miss Beverley?"

Cecilia coloured, and was silent.

"Is it possible," continued he, "you could ever for an instant suppose—but I cannot even name a supposition so foreign to all possibility."

"She is surely very amiable?"

"Yes," answered he, "she is innocent, gentle, and engaging; and I heartily wish she were in a better situation."

"Did you ever occasionally, or by any accident, correspond with her?"

"Never in my life."

"And were not your visits to the brother *sometimes*——"

"Have a care," interrupted he, laughing, "lest I reverse the question, and ask if your visits to the sister were not *sometimes* for the brother! But what does this mean? Could Miss Beverley imagine that *after* knowing her, the charms of Miss Belfield could put me in any danger?"

Cecilia, bound in delicacy and friendship not to betray the tender and trusting Henrietta, and internally satisfied of his innocence by his frankness, evaded any answer, and would now have done with the subject; but Delvile, eager wholly to exculpate himself, though by no means displeased at an enquiry which showed so much interest in his affections, continued his explanation.

"Miss Belfield has, I grant, an attraction in the simplicity of her manners which charms by its singularity: her heart, too, seems all purity, and her temper all softness. I have not, you find, been blind to her merit; on the contrary, I have both admired and pitied her. But far indeed is she removed from all chance of rivalry in my heart! A character such as hers for a while is irresistably alluring; but when its novelty is over, simplicity uninformed becomes wearisome, and softness without dignity is too indiscriminate to give delight. We sigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere sweetness; and heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our social hours wants spirit, intelligence, and cultivation. With Miss Beverley all these—"

"Talk not of all these," cried Cecilia, "when one single obstacle has power to render them valueless."

"But now," cried he, "that obstacle is surmounted."

"Surmounted only for a moment! for even in your letter this morning you confess the regret with which it fills you."

"And why should I deceive you? why pretend to think with pleasure, or even with indifference, of an obstacle which has had thus long the power to make me miserable? But where is happiness without allay? Is perfect bliss the condition of humanity? Oh, if we refuse to taste it till in its last state of refinement, how shall the cup of evil be ever from our lips?"

"How indeed!" said Cecilia, with a sigh; "the regret, I believe, will remain eternally upon your mind, and she, perhaps, who should cause, might soon be taught to partake of it."

"O, Miss Beverley! how have I merited this severity? Did I make my proposals lightly? Did I suffer my eagerness to conquer my reason? Have I not, on the contrary, been steady and considerate; neither biassed by passion nor betrayed by tenderness?"

"And yet in what," said Cecilia, "consists this boasted steadiness? I perceived it indeed, at Delvile Castle, but here—"

"The pride of heart which supported me there," cried he, "will support me no longer; what sustained my firmness, but your apparent severity? What enabled me to fly you, but your invariable coldness? The rigour with which I trampled upon my feelings I thought fortitude and spirit,—but I knew not then the pitying sympathy of Cecilia!"

"O that you knew it not yet!" cried she, blushing; "before the fatal accident, you thought of me, I believe, in a manner far more honourable."

"Impossible! differently, I thought of you, but never better, never so well as now. I then represented you all lovely in beauty, all perfect in goodness and virtue, but it was virtue in its highest majesty, not, as now, blended with the softest sensibility."

"Alas!" said Cecilia, "how the portrait is faded!"

"No, it is but more from the life: it is the sublimity of an angel, mingled with all that is attractive in woman.

But who is the friend we may venture to trust? To whom may I give bond? And from whom may I receive a treasure which for the rest of my life will constitute all its felicity?"

"Where can *I*," cried Cecilia, "find a friend, who, in this critical moment, will instruct me how to act!"

"You will find one," answered he, "in your own bosom: ask but yourself this plain question: will any virtue be offended by your honouring me with your hand?"

"Yes; duty will be offended, since it is contrary to the will of your parents."

"But is there no time for emancipation? Am not I of an age to choose for myself the partner of my life? Will not you in a few days be the uncontrolled mistress of your actions? Are we not both independent? Your ample fortune all your own, and the estates of my father so entailed, they must unavoidably be mine?"

"And are these," said Cecilia, "considerations to use us free from our duty?"

"No, but they are circumstances to relieve us from slavery. Let me not offend you if I am still more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be opposed to a thousand motives of convenience and happiness, why should we *both* be made unhappy, merely lest that pride should lose its gratification?"

This question, which so often and so angrily she had revolved in her own mind, again silenced her; and Delvile, with the eagerness of approaching success, redoubled his solicitations.

"Be mine," he cried, "sweetest Cecilia, and all will go well. To refer me to my friends is, effectually, to banish me for ever. Spare me, then, the unavailing task; and save me from the resistless entreaties of a mother, whose every desire I have held sacred, whose wish has been my law, and whose commands I have implicitly, invariably obeyed! Oh, generously save me from the dreadful alternative of wounding her maternal heart by a peremptory refusal, or of torturing my own with pangs to which it is unequal by an extorted obedience!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "how utterly impossible I can relieve you!"

"And why? once mine, irrevocably mine——"

"No, that would but irritate,—and irritate past hope of pardon."

"Indeed you are mistaken: to your merit they are far from insensible, and your fortune is just what they wish. Trust me, therefore, when I assure you that their displeasure, which both respect and justice will guard them from ever shewing *you*, will soon die wholly away. I speak not merely from my hopes; in judging my own friends, I consider human nature in general. Inevitable evils are ever best supported. It is suspense, it is hope that make the food of misery: certainty is always endured, because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling."

"And can you," cried Cecilia, "with reasoning so desperate be satisfied?"

"In a situation so extraordinary as ours," answered he, "there is no other. The voice of the world at large will be all in our favour. Our union neither injures our fortunes, nor taints our morality: with the character of each the other is satisfied, and both must be alike exculpated from mercenary views of interest, or romantic contempt of poverty; what right have we, then, to repine at an objection which, however potent, is single? Surely none. Oh, if wholly unchecked were the happiness I now have in view, if no foul storm sometimes lowered over the prospect, and for a moment obscured its brightness, how could my heart find room for joy so superlative? The whole world might rise against me, as the first man in it who had nothing left to wish!"

Cecilia, whose own hopes aided this reasoning, found not much to oppose to it; and with little more of entreaty, and still less of argument, Delvile at length obtained her consent to his plan. Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance she gave it, but it was the only alternative with a separation for ever, to which she held not the necessity adequate to the pain.

The thanks of Delvile were as vehement as had been his entreaties, which yet, however, were not at an end; the concession she had made was imperfect, unless its performance were immediate, and he now endeavoured to prevail with her to be his before the expiration of a week.

Here, however, his task ceased to be difficult; Cecilia, as ingenuous by nature as she was honourable from principle, having once brought her mind to consent to his proposal, sought not by studied difficulties to enhance the value of her compliance: the great point resolved upon, she held all else of too little importance for a contest.

Mrs. Charlton was now called in, and acquainted with the result of their conference. Her approbation by no means followed the scheme of privacy; yet she was too much rejoiced in seeing her young friend near the period of her long suspense and uneasiness, to oppose any plan which might forward their termination.

Delvile then again begged to know what male confidant might be entrusted with their project.

Mr. Monckton immediately occurred to Cecilia, though the certainty of his ill-will to the cause made all application to him disagreeable: but his long and steady friendship for her, his readiness to counsel and assist her, and the promises she had occasionally made, not to act without his advice, all concurred to persuade her that in a matter of such importance, she owed to him her confidence, and should be culpable to proceed without it. Upon him, therefore, she fixed; yet finding in herself a repugnance insuperable to acquainting him with her situation, she agreed that Delvile, who instantly proposed to be her messenger, should open to him the affair, and prepare him for their meeting.

Delvile then, rapid in thought and fertile in expedients, with a celerity and vigour which bore down all objections, arranged the whole conduct of the business. To avoid suspicion, he determined instantly to quit her, and, as soon as he had executed his commission with Mr. Monckton, to hasten to London, that the necessary preparations for their marriage might be made with despatch and secresy. He purposed, also, to find out Mr. Belfield, that he might draw up the bond with which he meant to entrust Mr. Monckton. This measure Cecilia would have opposed, but he refused to listen to her. Mrs. Charlton herself, though her age and infirmities had long confined her to her own house, gratified Cecilia upon this critical occasion with consenting to accompany her to the altar. Mr. Monckton was

depended upon for giving her away, and a church in London was the place appointed for the performance of the ceremony. In three days the principal difficulties to the union would be removed by Cecilia's coming of age, and in five days it was agreed they should actually meet in town. The moment they were married, Delvile promised to set off for the Castle, while in another chaise, Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton's.

This settled, he conjured her to be punctual, and earnestly recommending himself to her fidelity and affection, he bid her adieu.

CHAPTER III.

A RETROSPECTION.

LEFT now to herself, sensations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had passed for a while appeared a dream; her ideas were indistinct, her memory was confused, her faculties seemed all out of order, and she had but an imperfect consciousness either of the transaction in which she had just been engaged, or of the promise she had bound herself to fulfil: even truth from imagination she scarcely could separate; all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder!

But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her situation appeared to her such as it really was, divested alike of false terrors or delusive expectations, she found herself still farther removed from tranquillity.

Hitherto, though no stranger to sorrow, which the sickness and early loss of her friends had first taught her to feel, and which the subsequent anxiety of her own heart had since instructed her to bear, she had yet invariably possessed the consolation of self-approving reflections: but the step she was now about to take, all her principles opposed; it terrified her as undutiful, it shocked her as clandestine, and scarce was Delvile out of sight, before she regretted her consent to it as the loss of her self-esteem, and believed, even if a reconciliation took place, the re-

membrance of a wilful fault would still follow her, blemish in her own eyes the character she had hoped to support, and be a constant allay to her happiness, by telling her how unworthily she had obtained it.

Where frailty has never been voluntary, nor error stubborn, where the pride of early integrity is unsubdued, and the first purity of innocence is inviolate, how fearfully delicate, how "tremblingly alive" is the conscience of man! Strange, that what in its first state is so tender, can in its last become so callous!

Compared with the general lot of human misery, Cecilia had suffered nothing; but compared with the exaltation of ideal happiness, she had suffered much; willingly, however, would she again have borne all that had distressed her, experienced the same painful suspense, endured the same melancholy parting, and gone through the same cruel task of combating inclination with reason, to have relieved her virtuous mind from the new-born and intolerable terror of conscientious reproaches.

The equity of her notions permitted her not from the earnestness of Delvile's entreaties to draw any palliation for her consent to his proposal; she was conscious that but for her own too great facility those entreaties would have been ineffectual, since she well knew how little from any other of her admirers they would have availed.

But chiefly her affliction and repentance hung upon Mrs. Delvile, whom she loved, reverenced, and honoured, whom she dreaded to offend, and whom she well knew expected from her even exemplary virtue. Her praises, her partiality, her confidence in her character, which hitherto had been her pride, she now only recollected with shame and with sadness. The terror of the first interview never ceased to be present to her; she shrunk even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye, she felt stung by pointed satire, and subdued by cold contempt

Yet to disappoint Delvile so late, by forfeiting a promise so positively accorded; to trifle with a man who to her had been uniformly candid, to waver when her word was engaged, and retract when he thought himself secure,—honour, justice, and shame told her the time was now past.

"And yet is not this," cried she, "placing nominal before

actual evil? Is it not studying appearance at the expense of reality? If agreeing to wrong is criminal, is not performing it worse? If repentance for ill actions calls for mercy, has not repentance for ill intentions a yet higher claim?—And what reproaches from Delvile can be so bitter as my own?—What separation, what sorrow, what possible calamity can hang upon my mind with such heaviness, as the sense of committing voluntary evil?"

This thought so much affected her, that, conquering all regret either for Delvile or herself, she resolved to write to him instantly, and acquaint him of the alteration in her sentiments.

This, however, after having so deeply engaged herself, was by no means easy; and many letters were begun, but not one of them was finished, when a sudden recollection obliged her to give over the attempt,—for she knew not whither to direct to him.

In the haste with which their plan had been formed and settled, it had never once occurred to them that any occasion for writing was likely to happen. Delvile, indeed, knew that her address would still be the same; and with regard to his own, as his journey to London was to be secret, he purposed not having any fixed habitation. On the day of their marriage, and not before, they had appointed to meet at the house of Mrs. Roberts, in Fetter-lane, whence they were instantly to proceed to the church.

She might still, indeed, enclose a letter for him in one to Mrs. Hill, to be delivered to him on the destined morning when he called to claim her; but to fail him at the last moment, when Mr. Belfield would have drawn up the bond, when a licence was procured, the clergyman waiting to perform the ceremony, and Delvile without a suspicion but that the next moment would unite them for ever, seemed extending prudence into treachery, and power into tyranny. Delvile had done nothing to merit such treatment, he had practised no deceit, he had been guilty of no perfidy, he had opened to her his whole heart, and after showing it without any disguise, the option had been all her own to accept or refuse him.

A ray of joy now broke its way through the gloom of her apprehensions. "Ah!" cried she, "I have not, then, any

means to recede! an unprovoked breach of promise, at the very moment destined for its performance, would but vary the mode of acting wrong, without approaching nearer to acting right!"

This idea for a while not merely calmed but delighted her; to be the wife of Delvile seemed now a matter of necessity, and she soothed herself with believing that to struggle against it were vain.

The next morning during breakfast Mr. Monckton arrived.

Not greater, though winged with joy, had been the expedition of Delvile to open to him his plan, than was his his own, though only goaded by desperation, to make some effort with Cecilia for rendering it abortive. Nor could all his self-denial, the command which he held over his passions, nor the rigour with which his feelings were made subservient to his interest, in this sudden hour of trial, avail to preserve his equanimity. The refinements of hypocrisy, and the arts of insinuation, offered advantages too distant, and exacted attentions too subtle, for a moment so alarming; those arts and those attentions he had already for many years practised, with an address the most masterly, and a diligence the most indefatigable: success had of late seemed to follow his toils; the increasing infirmities of his wife, the disappointment and retirement of Cecilia, uniting to promise him a conclusion equally speedy and happy; when now, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, the sweet solace of his future cares, the long projected recompence of his past sufferings, was to be snatched from him for ever, and by one who, compared with himself, was but the acquaintance of a day.

Almost wholly off his guard from the surprise and horror of this apprehension, he entered the room with such an air of haste and perturbation, that Mrs. Charlton and her grand-daughters demanded what was the matter.

"I am come," he answered abruptly, yet endeavouring to recollect himself, "to speak with Miss Beverley upon business of some importance."

"My dear, then," said Mrs. Charlton, "you had better go with Mr. Monckton into your dressing-room."

Cecilia, deeply blushing, arose and led the way: slowly,

however, she proceeded, though urged by Mr. Monckton, to make speed. Certain of his disapprobation, and but doubtfully relieved from her own, she dreaded a conference which on his side, she foresaw, would be all exhortation and reproof, and on hers all timidity and shame.

"Good God," cried he, "Miss Beverley, what is this you have done? bound yourself to marry a man who despises, who scorns, who refuses to own you!"

Shocked by this opening, she started, but could make no answer.

"See you not," he continued, "the indignity which is offered you? Does the loose, the flimsy veil with which it is covered, hide it from your understanding, or disguise it from your delicacy?"

"I thought not,—I meant not," said she, more and more confounded, "to submit to any indignity, though my pride, in an exigence so peculiar, may give way, for a while, to convenience."

"To convenience?" repeated he, "to contempt, to derision, to insolence!"——

"O, Mr. Monckton!" interrupted Cecilia, "make not use of such expressions! they are too cruel for me to hear, and if I thought they were just, would make me miserable for life!"

"You are deceived, grossly deceived," replied he, "if you doubt their truth for a moment: they are not, indeed, even decently concealed from you; they are glaring as the day, and wilful blindness can alone obscure them."

"I am sorry, sir," said Cecilia, whose confusion, at a charge so rough, began now to give way to anger, "if this is your opinion; and I am sorry, too, for the liberty I have taken in troubling you upon such a subject."

An apology so full of displeasure instantly taught Mr. Monckton the error he was committing, and checking, therefore, the violence of those emotions to which his sudden and desperate disappointment gave rise, and which betrayed him into reproaches so unskilful, he endeavoured to recover his accustomed equanimity, and assuming an air of friendly openness, said, "Let me not offend you, my dear Miss Beverley, by a freedom which results merely from a solicitude to serve you, and which the length and intimacy

of our acquaintance had, I hoped, long since authorized. I know not how to see you on the brink of destruction without speaking, yet, if you are averse to my sincerity, I will curb it, and have done."

"No, do not have done," cried she, much softened; "your sincerity does me nothing but honour, and hitherto, I am sure, it has done me nothing but good. Perhaps I deserve your utmost censure; I feared it, indeed, before you came, and ought, therefore, to have better prepared myself for meeting with it."

This speech completed Mr. Monckton's self-victory; it showed him not only the impropriety of his turbulence, but gave him room to hope that a mildness more crafty would have better success.

"You cannot but be certain," he answered, "that my zeal proceeds wholly from a desire to be of use to you: my knowledge of the world might possibly, I thought, assist your inexperience, and the disinterestedness of my regard, might enable me to see and to point out the dangers to which you are exposed, from artifice and duplicity in those who have other purposes to answer than what simply belong to your welfare."

"Neither artifice nor duplicity," cried Cecilia, jealous for the honour of Delvile, "have been practised against me. Argument, and not persuasion, determined me, and if I have done wrong—those who prompted me have erred as unwittingly as myself."

"You are too generous to perceive the difference, or you would find nothing less alike. If, however, my plainness will not offend you, before it is quite too late, I will point out to you a few of the evils,—for there are some I cannot even mention, which at this instant do not merely threaten, but await you."

Cecilia started at this terrifying offer, and afraid to accept, yet ashamed to refuse it, hung back irresolute.

"I see," said Mr. Monckton, after a pause of some continuance, "your determination admits no appeal. The consequence must, indeed, be all our own, but I am greatly grieved to find how little you are aware of its seriousness. Hereafter you will wish, perhaps, that the friend of your earliest youth had been permitted to advise you; at present you only think him officious and impertinent, and therefore

he can do nothing you will be so likely to approve as quitting you. I wish you, then, greater happiness than seems prepared to follow you, and a counsellor more prosperous in offering his assistance."

He would then have taken his leave: but Cecilia called out, "Oh, Mr. Monckton! do you then give me up?"

"Not unless you wish it."

"Alas, I know not what to wish! except, indeed, the restoration of that security from self-blame, which till yesterday, even in the midst of disappointment, quieted and consoled me."

"Are you, then, sensible you have gone wrong, yet resolute not to turn back?"

"Could I tell, could I see," cried she, with energy, "which way I *ought* to turn, not a moment would I hesitate how to act! my heart should have no power, my happiness no choice,—I would recover my own esteem by any sacrifice that could be made!"

"What, then, can possibly be your doubt? To be as you were yesterday what is wanting but your own inclination?"

"Every thing is wanting; right, honour, firmness, all by which the just are bound, and all which the conscientious hold sacred!"

"These scruples are merely romantic; your own good sense, had it fairer play, would contemn them; but it is warped at present by prejudice and prepossession."

"No, indeed!" cried she, colouring at the charge, "I may have entered too precipitately into an engagement I ought to have avoided, but it is weakness of judgment, not of heart, that disables me from retrieving my error."

"Yet you will neither hear whither it may lead you, nor which way you may escape from it?

"Yes, sir," cried she, trembling, "I am now ready to hear both."

"Briefly, then, I will tell you. It will lead you into a family of which every individual will disdain you; it will make you inmate of a house of which no other inmate will associate with you; you will be insulted as an inferior, and reproached as an intruder; your birth will be a subject of ridicule, and your whole race only named with derision: and while the elders of the proud castle treat you with open

contempt, the man for whom you suffer will not dare to support you."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Cecilia, with the most angry emotion, "this whole representation is exaggerated, and the latter part is utterly without foundation."

"The latter part," said Mr. Monckton, "is of all other least disputable: the man who now dares not own, will then never venture to defend you. On the contrary, to make peace for himself he will be the first to neglect you. The ruined estates of his ancestors will be repaired by your fortune, while the name which you carry into his family will be constantly resented as an injury: you will thus be plundered though you are scorned, and told to consider yourself honoured that they condescend to make use of you! Nor here rests the evil of a forced connection with so much arrogance,—even your children, should you have any, will be educated to despise you!"

"Dreadful and horrible!" cried Cecilia; "I can hear no more.—Oh, Mr. Monckton, what a prospect have you opened to my view!"

"Fly from it, then, while it is yet in your power,—when two paths are before you, choose not that which leads to destruction; send instantly after Delvile and tell him that you have recovered your senses."

"I would long since have sent,—I wanted not a representation such as this,—but I know not how to direct to him, nor whither he is gone."

"All art and baseness to prevent your recantation!"

"No, sir, no," cried she with quickness; "whatever may be the truth of your painting in general, all that concerns—"

Ashamed of the vindication she intended, which yet in her own mind was firm and animated, she stopt and left the sentence unfinished.

"In what place were you to meet?" said Mr. Monckton; "you can at least send to him there."

"We were only to have met," answered she, in much confusion, "at the last moment,—and that would be too late—it would be too—I could not, without some previous notice, break a promise which I gave without any restriction."

"Is this your only objection?"

"It is: but it is one which I cannot conquer."

"Then you would give up this ill-boding connection, but from notions of delicacy with regard to the time?"

"Indeed I meant it, before you came."

"*I*, then, will obviate this objection: give me but the commission, either verbally or in writing, and I will undertake to find him out, and deliver it before night."

Cecilia, little expecting this offer, turned extremely pale, and after pausing some moments, said in a faltering voice, "What, then, sir, is your advice, in what manner—"

"I will say to him all that is necessary; trust the matter with me."

"No,—he deserves, at least, an apology from myself—though how to make it—"

She stopt, she hesitated, she went out of the room for pen and ink, she returned without them, and the agitation of her mind every instant encreasing, she begged him, in a faint voice, to excuse her while she consulted with Mrs. Charlton, and promising to wait upon him again, was hurrying away.

Mr. Monckton, however, saw too great danger in so much emotion to trust her out of his sight: he told her, therefore, that she would only encrease her perplexity, without reaping any advantage, by an application to Mrs. Charlton; that if she was really sincere in wishing to recede, there was not a moment to be lost, and Delvile should immediately be pursued.

Cecilia, sensible of the truth of this speech, and once more recollecting the unaffected earnestness with which, but an hour or two before, she had herself desired to renounce this engagement, now summoned her utmost courage to her aid, and, after a short, but painful struggle, determined to act consistently with her professions and her character, and, by one great and final effort, to conclude all her doubts, and try to silence even her regret, by completing the triumph of fortitude over inclination.

She called, therefore, for pen and ink, and without venturing herself from the room, wrote the following letter.

To Mortimer Delvile, Esq.

Accuse me not of caprice, and pardon my irresolution, when you find me shrinking with terror from the promise I

have made, and no longer either able or willing to perform it. The reproaches of your family I should very ill endure; but the reproaches of my own heart for an action I can neither approve nor defend, would be still more oppressive. With such a weight upon the mind, length of life would be burdensome; with a sensation of guilt early death would be terrific! These being my notions of the engagement into which we have entered, you cannot wonder, and you have still less reason to repine, that I dare not fulfil it. Alas! where would be your chance of happiness with one who in the very act of becoming yours would forfeit her own!

I blush at this tardy recantation, and I grieve at the disappointment it may occasion you: but I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor, who is never to be neglected with impunity. Consult him yourself; and I shall need no other advocate.

Adieu, and may all felicity attend you! If to hear of the almost total privation of mine, will mitigate the resentment with which you will probably read this letter, it may be mitigated but too easily! Yet my consent to a clandestine action shall never be repeated; and though I confess to you I am not happy, I solemnly declare my resolution is unalterable. A little reflection will tell you I am right, though a great deal of lenity may scarce suffice to make you pardon my being right no sooner.

C. B.

This letter, which with trembling haste, resulting from a fear of her own steadiness, she folded and sealed, Mr. Monckton, from the same apprehension, yet more eagerly received, and scarce waiting to bid her good morning, mounted his horse, and pursued his way to London.

Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton to acquaint her with what had passed: and notwithstanding the sorrow she felt in apparently injuring the man whom, in the whole world, she most wished to oblige, she yet found a satisfaction in the sacrifice she had made, that recompensed her for much of her sufferings, and soothed her into something like tranquillity; the true power of virtue she had scarce experienced before, for she found it a resource against the cruelest dejection, and a supporter in the bitterest disappointment.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EMBARRASSMENT.

THE day passed on without any intelligence; the next day, also, passed in the same manner; and on the third, which was her birth-day, Cecilia became of age.

The preparations which had long been making among her tenants to celebrate this event, Cecilia appeared to take some share, and endeavoured to find some pleasure in. She gave a public dinner to all who were willing to partake of it; she promised redress to those who complained of hard usage; she pardoned many debts; and distributed money, food, and cloathing to the poor. These benevolent occupations made time seem less heavy, and while they freed her from solitude, diverted her suspense. She still, however, continued at the house of Mrs. Charlton, the workmen having disappointed her in finishing her own.

But, in defiance of her utmost exertion, towards the evening of this day the uneasiness of her uncertainty grew almost intolerable. The next morning she had promised Delvile to set out for London, and he expected the morning after to claim her for his wife; yet Mr. Monckton neither sent nor came, and she knew not if her letter was delivered, or if still he was unprepared for the disappointment by which he was awaited. A secret regret for the unhappiness she must occasion him, which silently yet powerfully reproached her, stole fast upon her mind, and poisoned its tranquillity; for though her opinion was invariable in holding his proposal to be wrong, she thought too highly of his character to believe he would have made it but from a mistaken notion it was right. She painted him, therefore, to herself, as glowing with indignation, accusing her of inconsistency, and perhaps suspecting her of coquetry, and imputing her change of conduct to motives the most trifling and narrow, till with resentment and disdain, he drove her wholly from his thoughts.

In a few minutes, however, the picture was reversed;

Delvile no more appeared storming nor unreasonable; his face wore an aspect of sorrow, and his brow was clouded with disappointment: he forbore to reproach her, but the look which her imagination delineated was more piercing than words of severest import.

These images pursued and tormented her, drew tears from her eyes, and loaded her heart with anguish. Yet, when she recollected that her conduct had had in view a higher motive than pleasing Delvile, she felt that it ought to offer her a higher satisfaction: she tried, therefore, to revive her spirits, by reflecting upon her integrity, and refused all indulgence to this enervating sadness, beyond what the weakness of human nature demands, as some relief to its sufferings upon every fresh attack of misery.

A conduct such as this was the best antidote against affliction, whose arrows are never with so little difficulty repelled, as when they light upon a conscience which no self-reproach has laid bare to their malignancy.

Before six o'clock the next morning, her maid came to her bedside with the following letter, which she told her had been brought by an express.

To Miss Beverley.

May this letter, with one only from Delvile Castle, be the last that *Miss Beverley* may ever receive!

Yet sweet to me as is that hope, I write in the utmost uneasiness; I have just heard that a gentleman, whom, by the description that is given of him, I imagine is Mr. Monckton, has been in search of me with a letter which he was anxious to deliver immediately.

Perhaps this letter is from Miss Beverley, perhaps it contains directions which ought instantly to be followed: could I divine what they are, with what eagerness would I study to anticipate their execution! It will not, I hope, be too late to receive them on Saturday, when her power over my actions will be confirmed, and when every wish she will communicate, shall be gratefully, joyfully, and with delight fulfilled.

I have sought Belfield in vain; he has left Lord Vannelt, and no one knows whither he is gone. I have been obliged, therefore, to trust a stranger to draw up the bond; but he

is a man of good character, and the time of secrecy will be too short to put his discretion in much danger. To-morrow, Friday, I shall spend solely in endeavouring to discover Mr. Monckton; I have leisure sufficient for the search, since so prosperous has been my diligence, that *everything is prepared!*

I have seen some lodgings in Pall-Mall, which I think are commodious and will suit you: send a servant, therefore, before you to secure them. If upon your arrival I should venture to meet you there, be not, I beseech you, offended or alarmed; I shall take every possible precaution neither to be known nor seen, and I will stay with you only three minutes. The messenger who carries this is ignorant from whom it comes, for I fear his repeating my name among your servants, and he could scarce return to me with an answer before you will yourself be in town. Yes, loveliest Cecilia! at the very moment you receive this letter, the chaise will, I flatter myself, be at the door, which is to bring to me a treasure that will enrich every future hour of my life! And oh, as to me it will be exhaustless, may but its sweet dispenser experience some share of the happiness she bestows, and then what, save her own purity, will be so perfect, so unsullied, as the felicity of her

M. D?

The perturbation of Cecilia upon reading this letter was unspeakable: Mr. Monckton, she found, had been wholly unsuccessful, all her heroism had answered no purpose, and the transaction was as backward as before she had exerted it.

She was now, therefore, called upon to think and act entirely for herself. Her opinion was still the same, nor did her resolution waver, yet how to put it in execution she could not discern.

To write to him was impossible, since she was ignorant where he was to be found; to disappoint him at the last moment she could not resolve, since such a conduct appeared to her unfeeling and unjustifiable: for a few instants she thought of having him waited for at night in London, with a letter; but the danger of entrusting any one with such a commission, and the uncertainty of finding him

should he disguise himself, made the success of this scheme too precarious for trial.

One expedient alone occurred to her, which, though she felt to be hazardous, she believed was without an alternative: this was no other than hastening to London herself, consenting to the interview he had proposed in Pall-Mall, and then, by strongly stating her objections, and confessing the grief they occasioned her, to pique at once his generosity and his pride upon releasing her himself from the engagement into which he had entered.

She had no time to deliberate; her plan, therefore, was decided almost as soon as formed, and every moment being precious, she was obliged to awaken Mrs. Charlton, and communicate to her at once the letter from Delvile, and the new resolution she had taken.

Mrs. Charlton, having no object in view but the happiness of her young friend, with a facility that looked not for objections, and scarce saw them when presented, agreed to the expedition, and kindly consented to accompany her to London; for Cecilia, however concerned to hurry and fatigue her, was too anxious for the sanction of her presence to hesitate in soliciting it.

A chaise, therefore, was ordered; and with post-horses for speed, and two servants on horseback, the moment Mrs. Charlton was ready, they set out on their journey.

Scarce had they proceeded two miles on their way, when they were met by Mr. Monckton, who was hastening to their house.

Amazed and alarmed at a sight so unexpected, he stopt the chaise to enquire whither they were going.

Cecilia, without answering, asked if her letter had yet been received?

"I could not," said Mr. Monckton, "deliver it to a man who was not to be found: I was this moment coming to acquaint you how vainly I had sought him; but still that your journey is unnecessary, unless voluntary, since I have left it at the house where you told me you should meet to-morrow morning, and where he must then unavoidably receive it."

"Indeed, sir," cried Cecilia, "to-morrow morning will be too late,—in conscience, in justice, and even in decency

too late! I *must*, therefore, go to town; yet I go not, believe me, in opposition to your injunctions, but to enable myself, without treachery or dishonour, to fulfil them."

Mr. Monckton, aghast and confounded, made not any answer, till Cecilia gave orders to the postilion to drive on: he then hastily called to stop him, and began the warmest expostulation; but Cecilia, firm when she believed herself right, though wavering when fearful she was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan, and repeating her orders to the postilion, left him to his own reflections; grieved herself to reject his counsel, yet too intently occupied by her own affairs and designs to think long of any other.

CHAPTER V.

A TORMENT.

AT —— they stopt for dinner, Mrs. Charlton being too much fatigued to go on without some rest, though the haste of Cecilia to meet Delvile time enough for new arranging their affairs, made her regret every moment that was spent upon the road.

Their meal was not long, and they were returning to their chaise, when they were suddenly encountered by Mr. Morrice, who was just alighted from his horse.

He congratulated himself upon the happiness of meeting them with the air of a man who nothing doubted that happiness being mutual; then hastening to speak of the Grove, "I could hardly," he cried, "get away; my friend Monckton won't know what to do without me, for Lady Margaret, poor old soul, is in a shocking bad way indeed; there's hardly any staying in the room with her; her breathing is just like the grunting of a hog. She can't possibly last long, for she's quite upon her last legs, and tumbles about so when she walks alone, one would swear she was drunk."

"If you take infirmity," said Mrs. Charlton, who was now helped into the chaise, "for intoxication, you must suppose no old person sober."

"Vastly well said, ma'am," cried he; "I really forgot your being an old lady yourself, or I should not have made the observation. However, as to poor Lady Margaret, she may do as well as ever by and by, for she has an excellent constitution, and I suppose she has been hardly any better than she is now these forty years, for I remember when I was quite a boy hearing her called a limping old puddle."

"Well, we'll discuss this matter, if you please," said Cecilia, "some other time," and ordered the postilion to drive on. But before they came to their next stage, Morrice, having changed his horse, joined them, and rode on by their side, begging them to observe what haste he had made on purpose to have the pleasure of escorting them.

This forwardness was very offensive to Mrs. Charlton, whose years and character had long procured her more deference and respect: but Cecilia, anxious only to hasten her journey, was indifferent to everything, save what retarded it.

At the same inn they both again changed horses, and he still continued riding with them, and occasionally talking, till they were within twenty miles of London, when a disturbance upon the road exciting his curiosity, he hastily rode away from them to enquire into its cause.

Upon coming up to the place whence it proceeded, they saw a party of gentlemen on horseback surrounding a chaise which had been just overturned; and while the confusion in the road obliged the postilion to stop, Cecilia heard a lady's voice exclaiming, "I declare I dare say I am killed!" and instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, the fear of discovery and delay made her desire the man to drive on with all speed. He was preparing to obey her, but Morrice, galloping after them, called out, "Miss Beverley, one of the ladies that has been overturned, is an acquaintance of your's. I used to see her with you at Mrs. Harrel's."

"Did you?" said Cecilia, much disconcerted, "I hope she is not hurt?"

"No, not at all; but the lady with her is bruised to death; won't you come and see her?"

"I am too much in haste at present,—and I can do them

no good; but Mrs. Charlton I am sure will spare her servant, if he can be of any use."

"O, but the young lady wants to speak to you; she is coming up to the chaise as fast as ever she can."

"And how should she know me?" cried Cecilia, with much surprise; "I am sure she could not see me."

"O, I told her," answered Morrice, with a nod of self-approbation for what he had done, "I told her it was you, for I knew I could soon overtake you."

Displeasure at this officiousness was unavailing, for looking out of the window, she perceived Miss Larolles, followed by half her party, not three paces from the chaise.

"O, my dear creature," she called out, "what a terrible accident! I assure you I am so monstrously frightened you've no idea. It's the luckiest thing in the world that you were going this way. Never anything happened so excessively provoking; you've no notion what a fall we've had. It's horrid shocking, I assure you. How have you been all this time? You can't conceive how glad I am to see you."

"And to which will Miss Beverley answer first," cried a voice which announced Mr. Gosport, "the joy or the sorrow? For so adroitly are they blended, that a common auditor could with difficulty decide whether condolence or congratulation should have the precedency."

"How can you be so excessive horrid," cried Miss Larolles, "to talk of congratulation, when one's in such a shocking panic, that one does not know if one's dead or alive!"

"Dead, then, for any wager," returned he, "if we may judge from your stillness."

"I desire, now, you won't begin joking," cried she, "for I assure you it's an excessive serious affair. I was never so rejoiced in my life as when I found I was not killed. I've been so squeezed you've no notion. I thought for a full hour I had broke both my arms."

"And my heart at the same time," said Mr. Gosport; "I hope you did not imagine that the least fragile of the three?"

"All our hearts, give me leave to add," said Captain Aresby—just then advancing, "all our hearts must have

been *abîmés*, by the indisposition of Miss Larolles, had not their doom been fortunately revoked by the sight of Miss Beverley."

"Well, this is excessive odd," cried Miss Larolles, "that everybody should run away so from poor Mrs. Mears; she'll be so affronted you've no idea. I thought, Captain Aresby, you would have stayed to take care of her."

"I'll run and see how she is myself," cried Morrice, and away he galloped.

"Really, ma'am," said the Captain, "I am quite *au désespoir* to have failed in any of my devoirs; but I make it a principle to be a mere looker on upon these occasions, lest I should be so unhappy as to commit any *faux pas* by too much *empressement*."

"An admirable caution!" said Mr. Gosport, "and, to so ardent a temper, a necessary check!"

Cecilia, whom the surprise and vexation of so unseasonable a meeting, when she particularly wished to have escaped all notice, had hitherto kept in painful silence, began now to recover some presence of mind; and making her compliments to Miss Larolles and Mr. Gosport, with a slight bow to the Captain, she apologized for hurrying away, but told them she had an engagement in London which could not be deferred, and was then giving orders to the postilion to drive on, when Morrice returning, full speed, called out "The poor lady's so bad she is not able to stir a step; she can't put a foot to the ground, and she says she's quite black and blue; so I told her I was sure Miss Beverley would not refuse to make room for her in her chaise, till the other can be put to rights; and she says she shall take it as a great favour. Here, postilion, a little more to the right! come, ladies and gentlemen, get out of the way."

This impertinence, however extraordinary, Cecilia could not oppose; for Mrs. Charlton, ever compassionate and complying where there was any appearance of distress, instantly seconded the proposal: the chaise, therefore, was turned back, and she was obliged to offer a place in it to Mrs. Mears, who, though more frightened than hurt, readily accepted it, notwithstanding to make way for her without incommoding Mrs. Charlton, she was forced to get out herself.

She failed not, however, to desire that all possible expedition might be used in refitting the other chaise for their reception; and all the gentlemen but one, dismounted their horses, in order to assist, or seem to assist in getting it ready.

The only unconcerned spectator in the midst of the apparent general bustle, was Mr. Meadows; who viewed all that passed without troubling himself to interfere, and with an air of the most evident carelessness whether matters went well or went ill.

Miss Larolles, now returning to the scene of action, suddenly screamed out, "O dear, where's my little dog? I never thought of him, I declare! I love him better than any thing in the world. I would not have him hurt for a hundred thousand pounds. Lord, where is he?"

"Crushed or suffocated in the overturn, no doubt," said Mr. Gosport; "but as you must have been his executioner, what softer death could he die? If you will yourself inflict the punishment, I will submit to the same fate."

"Lord, how you love to plague one!" cried she; and then enquired among the servants what was become of her dog. The poor little animal, forgotten by its mistress, and disregarded by all others, was now discovered by its yelping; and soon found to have been the most material sufferer by the overturn, one of its fore legs being broken.

Could screams or lamentations, reproaches to the servants, or complaints against the Destinies, have abated his pain, or made a callus of the fracture, but short would have been the duration of his misery; for neither words were saved, nor lungs were spared; the very air was rent with cries, and all present were upbraided as if accomplices in the disaster.

The postilion, at length, interrupted this vociferation with news that the chaise was again fit for use; and Cecilia, eager to be gone, finding him little regarded, repeated what he said to Miss Larolles.

"The chaise!" cried she, "why you don't suppose I'll ever get into that horrid chaise any more? I do assure you I would not upon any account."

"Not get into it?" said Cecilia, "for what purpose, then, have we all waited till it was ready?"

"O, I declare I would not go in it for forty thousand

worlds. I would rather walk to an inn, if its a hundred and fifty miles off."

"But as it happens," said Mr. Gosport, "to be only seven miles, I fancy you will condescend to ride."

"Seven miles! Lord, how shocking! you frighten me so you have no idea. Poor Mrs. Mears! She'll have to go quite alone. I dare say the chaise will be down fifty times by the way. Ten to one but she breaks her neck! only conceive how horrid! I assure you I am excessive glad I am out of it."

"Very friendly, indeed!" said Mr. Gosport. "Mrs. Mears, then, may break her bones at her leisure!"

Mrs. Mears, however, when applied to, professed an equal aversion to the carriage in which she had been so unfortunate, and declared she would rather walk than return to it, though one of her ancles was already so swelled that she could hardly stand.

"Why, then, the best way, ladies," cried Morrice, with the look of a man happy in vanquishing all difficulties, "will be for Mrs. Charlton, and that poor lady with the bruises, to go together in that sound chaise, and then for us gentlemen to escort this young lady and Miss Beverley on foot, till we all come to the next inn. Miss Beverley, I know, is an excellent walker, for I have heard Mr. Monckton say so."

Cecilia, though in the utmost consternation at a proposal which must so long retard a journey she had so many reasons to wish hastened, knew not how either in decency or humanity to oppose it: and the fear of raising suspicion, from a consciousness how much there was to suspect, forced her to curb her impatience, and reduced her even to repeat the offer which Morrice had made, though she could scarce look at him for anger at his unseasonable forwardness.

No voice dissenting, the troop began to be formed. The foot consisted of the two young ladies and Mr. Gosport, who alighted to walk with Cecilia; the cavalry, of Mr. Meadows, the Captain, and Morrice, who walked their horses a foot pace, while the rest of the party rode on with the chaise, as attendants upon Mrs. Mears.

Just before they set off, Mr. Meadows, riding negligently up to the carriage, exerted himself so far as to say to Mrs. Mears, "Are you hurt, ma'am?" and, at the same instant,

seeming to recollect Cecilia, he turned about, and yawning while he touched his hat, said, "O, how d'ye do, ma'am?" and then, without waiting an answer to either of his questions, flapped it over his eyes, and joined the cavalcade, though without appearing to have any consciousness that he belonged to it.

Cecilia would most gladly have used the rejected chaise herself, but could not make such a proposal to Mrs. Charlton, who was past the age and the courage for even any appearance of enterprize. Upon enquiry, however, she had the satisfaction to hear that the distance to the next stage was but two miles, though multiplied to seven by the malice of Mr. Gosport.

Miss Larolles carried her little dog in her arms, declaring she would never more trust him a moment away from her. She acquainted Cecilia that she had been for some time upon a visit to Mrs. Mears, who, with the rest of the party, had taken her to see ——— House and gardens, where they had made an early dinner, from which they were just returning home when the chaise broke down.

She then proceeded, with her usual volubility, to relate the little nothings that had passed since the winter, flying from subject to subject, with no meaning but to be heard, and no wish but to talk, ever rapid in speech, though minute in detail. This loquacity met not with any interruption, save now and then a sarcastic remark from Mr. Gosport; for Cecilia was too much occupied by her own affairs to answer or listen to such uninteresting discourse.

Her silence, however, was at length forcibly broken; Mr. Gosport, taking advantage of the first moment Miss Larolles stopt for breath, said, "Pray what carries you to town, Miss Beverley, at this time of the year?"

Cecilia, whose thoughts had been wholly employed upon what would pass at her approaching meeting with Delvile, was so entirely unprepared for this question, that she could make to it no manner of answer, till Mr. Gosport, in a tone of some surprise, repeated it, and then, not without hesitation, "I have some business, sir, in London,—pray how long have you been in the country?"

"Business, have you?" cried he, struck by her evasion; "and pray what can you and business have in common?"

"More than you may imagine," answered she, with greater steadiness; "and perhaps before long I may even have enough to teach me the enjoyment of leisure."

"Why you don't pretend to play my Lady Notable, and become your own steward?"

"And what can I do better?"

"What? Why seek one ready made to take the trouble off your hands. There are such creatures to be found, I promise you: beasts of burthen, who will freely undertake the management of your estate, for no other reward than the trifling one of possessing it. Can you nowhere meet with such an animal?"

"I don't know," answered she, laughing, "I have not been looking out."

"And have none such made application to you?"

"Why no,—I believe not."

"Fie, fie! no register-office keeper has been pestered with more claimants. You know they assault you by dozens."

"You must pardon me, indeed, I know not any such thing."

"You know, then, why they do not, and that is much the same."

"I may conjecture why, at least: the place, I suppose, is not worth the service."

"No, no; the place, they conclude, is already seized, and the fee-simple of the estate is the heart of the owner. Is it not so?"

"The heart of the owner," answered she, a little confused, "may, indeed, be simple, but not, perhaps, so easily seized as you imagine."

"Have you, then, wisely saved it from a storm, by a generous surrender? you have been, indeed, in an excellent school for the study both of attack and defence; Delvile Castle is a fortress which, even in ruins, proves its strength by its antiquity: and it teaches, also, an admirable lesson, by displaying the dangerous, the infallible power of time, which defies all might, and undermines all strength; which breaks down every barrier, and shows nothing endurable but itself." Then, looking at her with an arch earnestness, "I think," he added, "you made a long visit there; did

this observation never occur to you? did you never perceive, never *feel*, rather, the insidious properties of time?"

"Yes, certainly," answered she, alarmed at the very mention of Delvile Castle, yet affecting to understand literally what was said metaphorically, "the havock of time upon the place could not fail striking me."

"And was its havock," said he, yet more archly, "merely external? is all within safe, sound and firm? and did the length of your residence shew its power by no new mischief?"

"Doubtless, not," answered she, with the same pretended ignorance; "the place is not in so desperate a condition as to exhibit any visible marks of decay in the course of three or four months."

"And, do you not know," cried he, "that the place to which I allude may receive a mischief in as many minutes which double the number of years cannot rectify? The internal parts of a building are not less vulnerable to accident than its outside; and though the evil may more easily be concealed, it will with greater difficulty be remedied. Many a fair structure have I seen, which, like that now before me," (looking with much significance at Cecilia,) "has to the eye seemed perfect in all its parts, and unhurt either by time or casualty, while within, some lurking evil, some latent injury, has secretly worked its way into the very *heart* of the edifice, where it has consumed its strength, and laid waste its powers, till, sinking deeper and deeper, it has sapped its very foundation, before the superstructure has exhibited any token of danger. Is such an accident among the things you hold to be possible?"

"Your language," said she, colouring very high, "is so florid, that I must own it renders your meaning rather obscure."

"Shall I illustrate it by an example? Suppose, during your abode in Delvile Castle,—"

"No, no," interrupted she, with involuntary quickness, "why should I trouble you to make illustrations?"

"O pray, my dear creature," cried Miss Larolles, "how is Mrs. Harrel? I was never so sorry for anybody in my life. I quite forgot to ask after her."

"Ay, poor Harrel!" cried Morrice, "he was a great loss

to his friends. I had just begun to have a regard for him: we were growing extremely intimate. Poor fellow! he really gave most excellent dinners."

"Harrel?" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Meadows, who seemed just then to first hear what was going forward, "who was he?"

"O, as good-natured a fellow as ever I knew in my life," answered Morrice; "he was never out of humour: he was drinking and singing and dancing to the very last moment. Don't you remember him, sir, that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer, but rode languidly on.

Morrice, ever more flippant than sagacious, called out, "I really believe the gentleman's deaf! he won't so much as say *humph, hay*, now; but I'll give him such a hallow in his ears, as shall make him hear me whether he will or no. Sir! I say!" bawling aloud, "have you forgot that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows, starting at being thus shouted at, looked towards Morrice with some surprise, and said, "Were you so obliging, sir, as to speak to me?"

"Lord, yes, sir," said Morrice, amazed; "I thought you had asked something about Mr. Harrel, "so I just made an answer to it;—that's all."

"Sir, you are very good," returned he, slightly bowing and then looking another way, as if thoroughly satisfied with what had passed.

"But I say, sir," resumed Morrice, "don't you remember how Mr. Harrel—"

"Mr. who, sir?"

"Mr. Harrel, sir; was not you just now asking me who he was?"

"O, ay, true," cried Meadows, in a tone of extreme weariness, "I am much obliged to you. Pray give my respects to him." And, touching his hat, he was riding away; but the astonished Morrice called out, "Your respects to him? why lord! sir, don't you know he's dead?"

"Dead!—who, sir?"

"Why Mr. Harrel, sir."

"Harrel?—O, very true," cried Meadows, with a face of sudden recollection; "he shot himself, I think, or was

knocked down, or something of that sort, I remember it perfectly."[1]

"O pray," cried Miss Larolles, "don't let's talk about it, it's the cruellest thing I ever knew in my life. I assure you I was so shocked, I thought I should never have got the better of it.' I remember the next night at Ranelagh I could talk of nothing else. I dare say I told it to five hundred people, I assure you I was tired to death; only conceive how distressing!"

"An excellent method," cried Mr. Gosport, "to drive it out of your own head, by driving it into the heads of your neighbours! But were you not afraid, by such an ebullition of pathos, to burst as many hearts as you had auditors?"

"O, I assure you," cried she, "everybody was so excessive shocked you've no notion; one heard of nothing else; all the world was raving mad about it."

"Really, yes," cried the Captain; "the subject was *obsédé* upon one *partout*. There was scarce any breathing for it: it poured from all directions; I must confess I was *ancanti* with it to a degree."

"But the most shocking thing in nature," cried Miss Larolles, "was going to the sale. I never missed a single day. One used to meet the whole world there, and everybody was so sorry you can't conceive. It was quite horrid. I assure you I never suffered so much before; it made me so unhappy you can't imagine."

"That I am most ready to grant," said Mr. Gosport, "be the powers of imagination ever so excentric."

"Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Marriot," continued Miss Larolles, "have behaved so ill you've no idea, for they have done nothing ever since but say how monstrously Mr. Harrel had cheated them, and how they lost such immense sums by him;—only conceive how ill-natur'd!"

"And they complain," cried Morrice, "that old Mr. Delvile used them worse; for that when they had been

[1] "Mr. Pepys ... took various opportunities of pronouncing (the character of Meadows) to be '*the best hit possible*' upon the present race of fine gentlemen."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 159, vol. ii.

(Mr. George Cambridge) "is wholly free from the coxcombical airs, either of impertinence, or negligence and nonchalance, that almost all the young men I meet, except also young Burke, are tainted with."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 214, vol. ii.

defrauded of all that money on purpose to pay their addresses to Miss Beverley, he would never let them see her, but all of a sudden took her off into the country, on purpose to marry her to his own son."

The cheeks of Cecilia now glowed with the deepest blushes; but finding by a general silence that she was expected to make some answer, she said, with what unconcern she could assume, "They were very much mistaken; Mr. Delvile had no such view."

"Indeed?" cried Mr. Gosport, again perceiving her change of countenance; "and is it possible you have actually escaped a siege, while everybody concluded you taken by assault? Pray where is young Delvile at present?"

"I don't—I can't tell, sir."

"Is it long since you have seen him?"

"It is two months," answered she, with yet more hesitation, "since I was at Delvile Castle."

"O, but," cried Morrice, "did not you see him while he was in Suffolk? I believe, indeed, he is there now, for it was only yesterday I heard of his coming down, by a gentleman who called upon Lady Margaret, and told us he had seen a stranger, a day or two ago, at Mrs. Charlton's door, and when he asked who he was, they told him his name was Delvile, and said he was on a visit at Mr. Biddulph's."

Cecilia was quite confounded by this speech; to have it known that Delvile had visited her, was in itself alarming; but to have her own equivocation thus glaringly exposed, was infinitely more dangerous. The just suspicions to which it must give rise filled her with dread, and the palpable evasion in which she had been discovered, overwhelmed her with confusion.

"So you had forgotten," said Mr. Gosport, looking at her with much archness, "that you had seen him *within* the two months? but no wonder; for where is the lady who having so many admirers, can be at the trouble to remember which of them she saw last? or who, being so accustomed to adulation, can hold it worth while to enquire whence it comes? A thousand Mr. Delviles are to Miss Beverley but as one; used from them all to the same tale, she regards them not individually as lovers, but collectively as men; and to gather, even from herself, which she is

most inclined to favour, she must probably desire, like Portia in the Merchant of Venice, that their names may be run over one by one, before she can distinctly tell which is which."

The gallant gaiety of this speech was some relief to Cecilia, who was beginning a laughing reply, when Morrice called out, "That man looks as if he was upon the scout." And, raising her eyes, she perceived a man on horseback, who, though much muffled up, his hat flapped, and a handkerchief held to his mouth and chin, she instantly, by his air and figure, recognized to be Delvile.

In much consternation at this sight, she forgot what she meant to say, and dropping her eyes, walked silently on. Mr. Gosport, attenti[illegible]ve to her motions, looked from the horseman, and after a short examination, said, "I think I have seen that man before; have *you*, Miss Beverley?" "Me?—no,"—answered she, "I believe not,—I hardly, indeed, see him now."

"*I* have, I am pretty sure," said Morrice; "and if I could see his face, I dare say I should recollect him."

"He seems very willing to know if he can recollect any of *us*," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not mistaken, he sees much better than he is seen."

He was now come up to them, and though a glance sufficed to discover the object of his search, the sight of the party with which she was surrounded made him not dare stop or speak to her, and therefore, clapping spurs to his horse, he galloped past them.

"See," cried Morrice, looking after him, "how he turns round to examine us! I wonder who he is!"

"Perhaps some highwayman!" cried Miss Larolles; "I assure you I am in a prodigious fright; I should hate to be robbed so you can't think."

"I was going to make much the same conjecture," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not greatly deceived, that man is a robber of no common sort. What think you, Miss Beverley, can you discern a thief in disguise?"

"No, indeed; I pretend to no such extraordinary knowledge."

"That's true, for all that you pretend is extraordinary ignorance."

"I have a good mind," said Morrice, "to ride after him, and see what he is about."

"What for?" exclaimed Cecilia, greatly alarmed; "there can certainly be no occasion!"

"No, pray don't," cried Miss Larolles, "for I assure you if he should come back to rob us, I should die upon the spot. Nothing could be so disagreeable; I should scream so, you've no idea."

Morrice then gave up the proposal, and they walked quietly on; but Cecilia was extremely disturbed by this accident; she readily conjectured that, impatient for her arrival, Delvile had ridden that way, to see what had re-[illegible]ed her, and she was sensible that nothing could be s[illegible] of the moti[illegible] [illegible]o [illegible]able as an immediate explanation [illegible]ive of her journey. Such a meeting, therefore, had she been alone, was just what she could have wished, though, thus unluckily encompassed, it only added to her anxiety.

Involuntarily, however, she quickened her pace, through her eagerness to be relieved from so troublesome a party: but Miss Larolles, who was in no such haste, protested she could not keep up with her; saying, "You don't consider that I have got this sweet little dog to carry, and he is such a shocking plague to me you've no notion. Only conceive what a weight he is!"

"Pray, ma'am," cried Morrice, "let me take him for you; I'll be very careful of him, I promise you; and you need not be afraid to trust me, for I understand more about dogs that about anything."

Miss Larolles, after many fond caresses, being really weary, consented, and Morrice placed the little animal before him on horseback: but while this matter was adjusting, and Miss Larolles was giving directions how she would have it held, Morrice exclaimed, "Look, look! that man is coming back! He is certainly watching us. There! now he's going off again!—I suppose he saw me remarking him."

"I dare say he's laying in wait to rob us," said Miss Larolles; "so when we turn off the high road, to go to Mrs. Mears, I suppose he'll come gallopping after us. It's excessive horrid, I assure you."

"'Tis a petrifying thing," said the Captain, "that one must always be *degouté* by some wretched being or other of

this sort; but pray be not deranged, I will ride after him, if you please, and do *mon possible* to get rid of him."

"Indeed I wish you would," answered Miss Larolles, "for I assure you he has put such shocking notions into my head, it's quite disagreeable."

"I shall make it a principle," said the Captain, "to have the honour of obeying you;" and was riding off, when Cecilia, in great agitation, called out, "Why should you go, sir?—he is not in our way, pray let him alone—for what purpose should you pursue him?"

"I hope," said Mr. Gosport, "for the purpose of making him join our company, to some part of which I fancy he would be no very intolerable addition."

This speech again silenced Cecilia, who perceived, with the utmost confusion, that both Delvile and herself were undoubtedly suspected by Mr. Gosport, if not already actually betrayed to him. She was obliged, therefore, to let the matter take its course, though quite sick with apprehension lest a full discovery should follow the projected pursuit.

The Captain, who wanted not courage, however deeply in vanity and affectation he had buried common sense, stood suspended, upon the request of Cecilia that he would not go, and, with a shrug of distress, said, "Give me leave to own I am *parfaitement* in a state the most *accablant* in the world: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to profit of the occasion to accommodate either of these ladies; but as they proceed upon different principles, I am *indecidé* to a degree which way to turn myself!"

"Put it to the vote, then," said Morrice; "the two ladies have both spoke; now, then, for the gentlemen. Come, sir," to Mr. Gosport, "what say you?"

"O, fetch the culprit back, by all means," answered he; "and then let us all insist upon his opening his cause, by telling us in what he has offended us; for there is no part of his business, I believe, with which we are less acquainted."

"Well," said Morrice, "I'm for asking him a few questions too; so is the Captain; so everybody has spoke but you, sir," addressing himself to Mr. Meadows. "So now, sir, let's hear your opinion."

Mr. Meadows, appearing wholly inattentive, rode on. "Why, sir! I say!" cried Morrice, louder, "we are all

waiting for your vote. Pray what is the gentleman's name? it's duced hard to make him hear one."

"His name is Meadows," said Miss Larolles, in a low voice, "and I assure you sometimes he won't hear people by the hour together. He's so excessive absent you've no notion. One day he made me so mad, that I could not help crying; and Mr. Sawyer was standing by the wh[illegible] time! and I assure you I believe he laughed at me. Only conceive how distressing!"

"May be," said Morrice, "it's out of bashfulness: perhaps he thinks we shall cut him up."

"Bashfulness," repeated Miss Larolles: "Lord, you don't conceive the thing at all. Why he's at the very head of the *ton*. There's nothing in the world so fashionable as taking no notice of things, and never seeing people, and saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word, and not knowing one's own acquaintance, and always finding fault. All the *ton* do so, and I assure you as to Mr. Meadows, he's so excessively courted by everybody, that if he does but say a syllable, he thinks it such an immense favour, you've no idea."

This account, however little alluring in itself, of his celebrity, was yet sufficient to make Morrice covet his further acquaintance: for Morrice was ever attentive to turn his pleasure to his profit, and never negligent of his interest, but when ignorant how to pursue it. He returned, therefore, to the charge, though by no means with the same freedom he had begun it, and lowering his voice to a tone of respect and submission, he said, "Pray, sir, may we take the liberty to ask your advice, whether we shall go on, or take a turn back?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer; but when Morrice was going to repeat his question, without appearing even to know that he was near him, he abruptly said to Miss Larolles, "Pray what is become of Mrs. Mears? I don't see her amongst us."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," exclaimed she, "how can you be so odd? Don't you remember she went on in a chaise to the inn?"

"O, ay, true," cried he; "I protest I had quite forgot it; I beg your pardon, indeed. Yes, I recollect now,—she fell off her horse."

"Her horse! Why you know she was in her chaise."

"Her chaise was it?—ay, true, so it was. Poor thing! —I am glad she was not hurt."

"Not hurt? Why she's so excessively bruised, she can't stir a step! Only conceive what a memory you've got!"

"I am most extremely sorry for her indeed," cried he, again stretching himself and yawning; "poor soul!—I hope she won't die. Do you think she will?"

"Die!" repeated Miss Larolles, with a scream, "Lord, how shocking! You are really enough to frighten one to hear you."

"But sir," said Morrice, "I wish you would be so kind as to give us your vote; the man will else be gone so far, we sha'n't be able to overtake him.—Though I do really believe that is the very fellow coming back to peep at us again!"

"I am *ennuyé* to a degree," cried the Captain; "he is certainly set upon us as a spy, and I must really beg leave to enquire of him upon what principle he incommodes us." And instantly he rode after him.

"And so will I too," cried Morrice following.

Miss Larolles screamed after him to give her first her little dog: but with a schoolboy's eagerness to be foremost, he gallopped on without heeding her.

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment; the discovery of Delvile seemed unavoidable, and his impatient and indiscreet watchfulness must have rendered the motives of his disguise but too glaring. All she had left to hope was arriving at the inn before the detection was announced, and at least saving herself the cruel mortification of hearing the raillery which would follow it.

Even this, however, was not allowed her; Miss Larolles, whom she had no means to quit, hardly stirred another step, from her anxiety for the dog, and the earnestness of her curiosity about the stranger. She loitered, stopt, now to talk, and now to listen, and was scarce moved a yard from the spot where she had been left, when the Captain and Morrice returned.

"We could not for our lives overtake the fellow," said Morrice; "he was well mounted, I promise you, and I'll warrant he knows what he's about, for he turned off so

short at a place where there were two narrow lanes, that we could not make out which way he went."

Cecilia, relieved and delighted by this unexpected escape, now recovered her composure, and was content to saunter on without repining.

"But though we could not seize his person," said the Captain, "we have debarrassed ourselves *tout à fait* from his pursuit; I hope, therefore, Miss Larolles will make a revoke of her apprehensions."

The answer to this was nothing but a loud scream, with an exclamation, "Lord, where's my dog?"

"Your dog!" cried Morrice, looking aghast, "good stars! I never thought of him!"

"How excessive barbarous!" cried Miss Larolles, "you've killed him, I dare say. Only think how shocking! I had rather have seen anybody served so in the world. I shall never forgive it, I assure you."

"Lord, ma'am," said Morrice, "how can you suppose I've killed him? poor, pretty creature, I'm sure I liked him prodigiously. I can't think for my life where he can be: but I have a notion he must have dropt down somewhere while I happened to be on the full gallop. I'll go look him, however, for we went at such a rate that I never missed him."

Away again rode Morrice.

"I am *abîmé* to the greatest degree," said the Captain, "that the poor little sweet fellow should be lost: if I had thought him in any danger, I would have made it a principle to have had a regard to his person myself. Will you give me leave, ma'am, to have the honour of seeking him *partout?*"

"O, I wish you would with all my heart; for I assure you if I don't find him, I shall think it so excessive distressing you can't conceive."

The Captain touched his hat, and was gone.

These repeated impediments almost robbed Cecilia of all patience; yet her total inability of resistance obliged her to submit, and compelled her to go, stop, or turn, according to their own motions.

"Now if Mr. Meadows had the least good-nature in the world," said Miss Larolles, "he would offer to help us; but

he's so excessive odd, that I believe if we were all of us to fall down and break our necks, he would be so absent, he would hardly take the trouble to ask us how we did."

"Why in so desperate a case," said Mr. Gosport, "the trouble would be rather superfluous. However, don't repine that one of the cavaliers stays with us by way of guard, lest your friend the spy should take us by surprise while our troop is dispersed."

"O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "now you put it in my head, I dare say that wretch has got my dog! only think how horrid!"

"I saw plainly," said Mr. Gosport, looking significantly at Cecilia, "that he was feloniously inclined, though I must confess I took him not for a dog-stealer."

Miss Larolles then, running up to Mr. Meadows, called out, "I have a prodigious immense favour to ask of you, Mr. Meadows."

"Ma'am!" cried Mr. Meadows, with his usual start.

"It's only to know, whether if that horrid creature should come back, you could not just ride up to him and shoot him, before he gets to us? Now will you promise me to do it?"

"You are vastly good," said he, with a vacant smile; "what a charming evening! Do you love the country?"

"Yes, vastly; only I'm so monstrously tired, I can hardly stir a step. Do *you* like it?"

"The country? O no! I detest it! Dusty hedges, and chirping sparrows! 'Tis amazing to me anybody can exist upon such terms."

"I assure you," cried Miss Larolles, "I'm quite of your opinion. I hate the country so you've no notion. I wish with all my heart it was all under ground. I declare, when I first go into it for the summer, I cry so you can't think. I like nothing but London.—Don't you?"

"London!" repeated Mr. Meadows, "O melancholy! the sink of all vice and depravity. Streets without light! Houses without air! Neighbourhood without society! Talkers without listeners!—'Tis astonishing any rational being can endure to be so miserably immured."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," cried she, angrily, "I believe you would have one live nowhere!"

"True, very true, ma'am," said he, yawning, "one really lives no where; one does but vegetate, and wish it all at an end. Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

"Me! no indeed; I assure you I like living of all things. Whenever I'm ill, I'm in such a fright you've no idea. I always think I'm going to die, and it puts me so out of spirits you can't think.——Does not it you too?"

Here Mr. Meadows, looking another way, began to whistle.

"Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "how excessive distressing! to ask one questions, and then never hear what one answers!"

Here the Captain returned alone; and Miss Larolles, flying to meet him, demanded where was her dog?

"I have the *malheur* to assure you," answered he, "that I never was more *aneanti* in my life! the pretty little fellow has broke another leg!"

Miss Larolles, in a passion of grief, then declared she was certain that Morrice had maimed him thus on purpose, and desired to know where the vile wretch was?

"He was so much discomposed at the incident," replied the Captain, "that he rode instantly another way. I took up the pretty fellow therefore myself, and have done *mon possible* not to derange him."

The unfortunate little animal was then delivered to Miss Larolles; and after much lamentation, they at length continued their walk, and, without further adventure, arrived at the inn.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTERRUPTION.

BUT here, instead of finding, as she expected, Mrs. Charlton and fresh horses in readiness, Cecilia saw neither chaise nor preparation; Mrs. Charlton was quietly seated in a parlour, and drinking tea with Mrs. Mears.

Vexed and disappointed, she ordered horses immediately to the chaise, and entreated Mrs. Charlton to lose no more

time. But the various delays which had already retarded them, had made it now so late that it was impossible to get into London by day-light, and Mrs. Charlton not having courage to be upon the road after dark, had settled to sleep at the inn, and purposed not to proceed till the next morning.

Half distracted at this new difficulty, Cecilia begged to speak with her alone, and then represented in the most earnest manner, the absolute necessity there was for her being in London that night: "Everything," said she, "depends upon it, and the whole purpose of my journey will otherwise be lost, for Mr. Delvile will else think himself extremely ill used, and to make him reparation, I may be compelled to submit to almost whatever terms he shall propose."

Mrs. Charlton, kind and yielding, withstood not this entreaty, which Cecilia made with infinite pain to herself, from the reluctance she felt to pursuing her own interest and inclination in opposition to those of her worthy old friend; but as she was now circumstanced, she considered the immediate prosecution of her journey as her only resource against first irritating Delvile by an abrupt disappointment, and appeasing him next by a concession which would make that disappointment end in nothing.

The chaise was soon ready, and Mrs. Charlton and Cecilia were rising to take leave of the company, when a man and horse gallopped full speed into the inn-yard, and in less than a minute Morrice bounced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried he, quite out of breath with haste, "I have got some news for you! I've just found out who that person is that has been watching us."

Cecilia, starting at this most unwelcome intelligence, would now have run into the chaise without hearing him proceed; but Mrs. Charlton, who knew neither whom nor what he meant, involuntarily stopt, and Cecilia, whose arm she leant upon, was compelled to stay.

Every one else eagerly desired to know who he was.

"Why I'll tell you," said he, "how I found him out. I was thinking in my own mind what I could possibly do to make amends for that unlucky accident about the dog, and

just then I spied the very man that had made me drop him; so I thought at least I'd find out who he was. I rode up to him so quick, that he could not get away from me, though I saw plainly it was the thing he meant. But still he kept himself muffled up, just as he did before. Not so snug, thought I, my friend, I shall have you yet! It's a fine evening, sir, says I; but he took no notice: so then I came more to the point; sir, says I, I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you, though I quite forget where. Still he made no answer. If you have no objection, sir, says I, I shall be glad to ride with you, for the night's coming on, and we have neither of us a servant. But then, without a word speaking, he rode on the quicker. However, I jogged by his side, as fast as he, and said, Pray, sir, did you know any thing of that company you were looking at so hard just now? And at this he could hold out no longer; he turned to me in a most fierce passion, and said pray, sir, don't be troublesome. And then he got off; for when I found by his voice who he was, I let him alone."

Cecilia, who could bear to hear no more, again hastened Mrs. Charlton, who now moved on; but Morrice, stepping between them both and the door, said, "Now do pray, Miss Beverley, guess who it was."

"No indeed, I cannot," said she, in the utmost confusion, "nor have I any time to hear. Come, dear madam, we shall be very late indeed."

"O but I *must* tell you before you go;—why it was young Mr. Delvile! the same that I saw with you one night at the Pantheon, and that I used to meet last spring at Mr. Harrel's."

"Mr. Delvile!" repeated every one; "very strange he should not speak."

"Pray, ma'am," continued Morrice, "is it not the same gentleman that was at Mr. Biddulph's?"

Cecilia, half dead with shame and vexation, stammered out, "No, no—I believe not,—I can't tell;—I have not a moment to spare."

And then, at last, she got Mrs. Charlton out of the room, and into the chaise. But thither, before she could drive off, she was followed by Mr. Gosport, who gravely came to offer his advice that she would immediately lodge an infor-

mation at the Public-office in Bow-street,[1] that a very suspicious looking man had been observed loitering in those parts, who appeared to harbour most dangerous designs against her person and property.

Cecilia was too much confounded to rally, or reply, and Mr. Gosport returned to his party with his speech unanswered.

The rest of the journey was without any new casualty, for late as it was, they escaped being robbed: but neither robbers nor new casualties were wanting to make it unpleasant to Cecilia; the incidents which had already happened sufficed for that purpose; and the consciousness of being so generally betrayed, added to the delay of her recantation, prepared her for nothing but mortifications to herself, and conflicts with Delvile the most bitter and severe.

It was near ten o'clock before they arrived in Pall-Mall. The house to which Delvile had given directions was easily found, and the servant sent forward had prepared the people of it for their reception.

In the cruellest anxiety and trepidation, Cecilia then counted every moment till Delvile came. She planned an apology for her conduct with all the address of which she was mistress, and determined to bear his disappointment and indignation with firmness: yet the part she had to act was both hard and artificial; she sighed to have it over, and repined she must have it at all.

The instant there was a knock at the door, she flew out upon the stairs to listen; and hearing his well-known voice enquiring for the ladies who had just taken the lodgings, she ran back to Mrs. Charlton, saying, "Ah, madam, assist me I entreat! for now must I merit, or forfeit your esteem for-ever."

[1] "It was Fielding, and his half-brother, Sir John Fielding, . . . who made Bow-Street Police Office and Bow-Street Officers famous in our annals.

"I have actually come to Bow-Street in the morning, and while I have been leaning on the desk, had three or four people come in and say, 'I was robbed by two highwaymen in such a place;' 'I was robbed by a single highwayman in such a place.' . . . Where are the highway-robberies now?"—*Evidence of Townshend, the Bow-Street Officer, before the House of Commons in* 1816, *as quoted in Cunningham's "Handbook for London."*

"Can you pardon," cried Delvile, as he entered the room, "an intrusion which was not *in our bond?* But how could I wait till to-morrow, when I knew you were in town to-night?"

He then made his compliments to Mrs. Charlton, and, after enquiring how she had borne her journey, turned again to Cecilia, whose uneasy sensations he saw but too plainly in her countenance: "Are you angry," cried he, anxiously, "that I have ventured to come hither to-night?"

"No," answered she, struggling with all her feelings for composure; "what we wish is easily excused; and I am glad to see you to-night, because otherwise—"

She hesitated; and Delvile, little imagining why, thanked her in the warmest terms for her condescension. He then related how he had been tormented by Morrice, enquired why Mr. Monckton had not accompanied her, and what could possibly have induced her to make her journey so late, or, with so large a party, to be walking upon the high road instead of hastening to London.

"I wonder not," answered she, more steadily, "at your surprise, though I have now no time to lessen it. You have never, I find, received my letter?"

"No," cried he, much struck by her manner; "was it to forbid our meeting till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" she repeated expressively, "no; it was to forbid—"

Here the door was suddenly opened, and Morrice burst into the room.

The dismay and astonishment of Delvile at sight of him, could only be equalled by the confusion and consternation of Cecilia; but Morrice, perceiving neither, abruptly called out, "Miss Beverley, I quite beg your pardon for coming so late, but you must know——" then stopping short upon seeing Delvile, "Good lord," he exclaimed, "if here is not our *gentleman spy!* Why, sir, you have not spared the spur! I left you galloping off quite another way."

"However that may be, sir," cried Delvile, equally enraged at the interruption and the observation, "you did not, I presume, wait upon Miss Beverley to talk of *me?*"

"No, sir," answered he, lightly, "for I had told her all

about you at the inn. Did not I, Miss Beverley? Did not I tell you I was sure it was Mr. Delvile that was dodging us about so? Though I believe, sir, you thought I had not found you out?"

"And pray, young man," said Mrs. Charlton, much offended by this familiar intrusion, "how did you find *us* out?"

"Why, ma'am, by the luckiest accident in the world! Just as I was riding into town, I met the returned chaise that brought you, and I knew the postillion very well, as I go that road pretty often: so, by the merest chance in the world, I saw him by the light of the moon. And then he told me where he had set you down."

"And pray, sir," again asked Mrs. Charlton, "what was your reason for making the enquiry?"

"Why, ma'am, I had a little favour to ask of Miss Beverley, that made me think I would take the liberty to call."

"And was this time of night, sir," she returned, "the only one you could choose for that purpose?"

"Why, ma'am, I'll tell you how that was; I did not mean to have called till to-morrow morning; but as I was willing to know if the postillion had given me a right direction, I knocked one soft little knock at the door, thinking you might be gone to bed after your journey, merely to ask if it was the right house; but when the servant told me there was a gentleman with you already, I thought there would be no harm in just stepping for a moment up stairs."

"And what, sir," said Cecilia, whom mingled shame and vexation had hitherto kept silent, "is your business with me?"

"Why, ma'am, I only just called to give you a direction to a most excellent dog-doctor, as we call him, that lives at the corner of——"

"A dog-doctor, sir?" repeated Cecilia, "and what have I to do with any such direction?"

"Why you must know, ma'am, I have been in the greatest concern imaginable about that accident which happened to me with the poor little dog, and so,——"

"What little dog, sir?" cried Delvile, who now began

to conclude he was not sober, "do you know what you are talking of?"

"Yes, sir, for it was that very little dog you made me drop out of my arms, by which means he broke his other leg."

"*I* made you drop him?" cried Delvile, angrily, "I believe, sir, you had much better call some other time; it does not appear to me that you are in a proper situation for remaining here at present."

"Sir, I shall be gone in an instant," answered Morrice; "I merely wanted to beg the favour of Miss Beverley to tell that young lady that owned the dog, that if she will carry him to this man, I am sure he will make a cure of him."

"Come, sir," said Delvile, convinced now of his inebriety, "if you please we will walk away together."

"I don't mean to take *you* away, sir," said Morrice, looking very significantly, "for I suppose you have not rodo so hard to go so soon; but as to me, I'll only write the direction, and be off."

Delvile, amazed and irritated at so many following specimens of ignorant assurance, would not, in his present eagerness, have scrupled turning him out of the house, had he not thought it imprudent, upon such an occasion, to quarrel with him, and improper, at so late an hour, to be left behind; he therefore only, while he was writing the direction, told Cecilia in a low voice, that he would get rid of him and return in an instant.

They then went together; leaving Cecilia in an agony of distress surpassing all she had hitherto experienced. "Ah, Mrs. Charlton," she cried, "what refuge have I now from ridicule, or perhaps disgrace! Mr. Delvile has been detected watching me in disguise! he has been discovered at this late hour meeting me in private! The story will reach his family with all the hyperbole of exaggeration;——how will his noble mother disdain me! how cruelly shall I sink before the severity of her eye!"

Mrs. Charlton tried to comfort her, but the effort was vain, and she spent her time in the bitterest repining till eleven o'clock. Delvile's not returning then added wonder to her sadness, and the impropriety of his returning at all, so late, grew every instant more glaring.

At last, though in great disturbance, and evidently much ruffled in his temper, he came: "I feared," he cried, "I had passed the time for admittance, and the torture I have suffered from being detained has almost driven me wild. I have been in misery to see you again,——your looks, your manner,—the letter you talk of,—all have filled me with alarm; and though I know not what it is I have to dread, I find it impossible to rest a moment without some explanation. Tell me, then, why you seem thus strange and thus depressed? tell me what that letter was to forbid? tell me any thing, and every thing, but that you repent your condescension."

"That letter," said Cecilia, "would have explained to you all. I scarce know how to communicate its contents; yet I hope you will hear with patience what I acknowledge I have resolved upon only from necessity. That letter was to tell you that to-morrow we must not meet;—it was to prepare you, indeed, for our meeting, perhaps, never more!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed he, starting, "what is it you mean?"

"That I have made a promise too rash to be kept; that you must pardon me if, late as it is, I retract, since I am convinced it was wrong, and must be wretched in performing it."

Confounded and dismayed, for a moment he continued silent, and then passionately called out, "Who has been with you to defame me in your opinion?——Who has barbarously wronged my character since I left you last Monday? Mr. Monckton received me coldly, has he injured me in your esteem? Tell, tell me but to whom I owe this change, that my vindication, if it restores not your favour, may at least make you cease to blush that once I was honoured with some share of it!"

"It wants not to be restored," said Cecilia, with much softness, "since it has never been alienated. Be satisfied that I think of you as I thought when we last parted, and generously forbear to reproach me, when I assure you I am actuated by principles which you ought not to disapprove."

"And are you then unchanged?" cried he, more gently, "and is your esteem for me still——"

"I thought it justice to say so once," cried she, hastily interrupting him, "but exact from me nothing more. It is

too late for us now to talk any longer; to-morrow you may find my letter at Mrs. Roberts's, and that, short as it is, contains my resolution and its cause."

"Never," cried he, vehemently, "can I quit you without knowing it! I would not linger till to-morrow in this suspense to be master of the universe!"

"I have told it you, sir, already: whatever is clandestine carries a consciousness of evil, and so repugnant do I find it to my disposition and opinions, that till you give me back the promise I so unworthily made, I must be a stranger to peace, because at war with my own actions and myself."

"Recover, then, your peace," cried Delvile, with much emotion, "for I here acquit you of all promise!—to fetter, to compel you, were too inhuman to afford me any happiness. Yet hear me, dispassionately hear me, and deliberate a moment before you resolve upon my exile. Your scruples I am not now going to combat, I grieve that they are so powerful, but I have no new arguments with which to oppose them; all I have to say, is, that it is now too late for a retreat to satisfy them."

"True, sir, and far too true! yet is it always best to do right, however tardily; always better to repent, than to grow callous in wrong."

"Suffer not, however, your delicacy for my family to make you forget what is due to yourself as well as to me: the fear of shocking you, led me just now to conceal what a greater fear now urges me to mention. The honour I have had in view is already known to many, and in a very short time there are none will be ignorant of it. That impudent young man, Morrice, had the effrontery to rally me upon my passion for you, and though I reproved him with great asperity, he followed me into a coffee house, whither I went merely to avoid him. There I forced myself to stay, till I saw him engaged with a news-paper, and then, through various private streets and alleys, I returned hither; but judge my indignation, when, the moment I knocked at the door, I perceived him again at my side!"

"Did he, then, see you come in?"

"I angrily demanded what he meant by thus pursuing me; he very submissively begged my pardon, and said, he had had a notion I should come back, and had therefore only

followed me to see if he was right! I hesitated for an instant whether to chastise, or confide in him, but believing a few hours would make his impertinence immaterial, I did neither,—the door opened, and I came in."

He stopt; but Cecilia was too much shocked to answer him.

"Now, then," said he, "weigh your objections against the consequences which must follow. It is discovered I attended you in town; it will be presumed I had your permission for such attendance: to separate, therefore, now, will be to no purpose with respect to that delicacy which makes you wish it. It will be food for conjecture, for enquiry, for wonder, almost while both our names are remembered, and while to me it will bring the keenest misery in the severity of my disappointment, it will cast over your own conduct a veil of mystery and obscurity wholly subversive of that unclouded openness, that fair, transparent ingenuousness, by which it has hitherto been distinguished."

"Alas, then," said she, "how dreadfully have I erred, that whatever path I now take must lead me wrong!"

"You overwhelm me with grief," cried Delvile, "by finding you thus distressed, when I had hoped—Oh, cruel Cecilia! how different to this did I hope to have met you! all your doubts settled, all your fears removed, your mind perfectly composed, and ready, unreluctantly, to ratify the promise with so much sweetness accorded me!—where now are those hopes!—where now——"

"Why will you not begone?" cried Cecilia, uneasily, "indeed it is too late to stay."

"Tell me, first," cried he, with great energy, "and let good Mrs. Charlton speak too,—ought not every objection to our union, however potent, to give way, without further hesitation, to the certainty that our intending it must become public? Who that hears of our meeting in London, at such a season, in such circumstances, and at such hours,——"

"And why," cried Cecilia, angrily, "do you mention them, and yet stay?"

"I *must* speak now," answered he with quickness, "or lose for ever all that is dear to me, and add to the misery of that loss, the heart-piercing reflection of having injured her whom of all the world I most love, most value, and most revere."

"And how injured?" cried Cecilia, half alarmed and half displeased: "Surely I must strangely have lived to fear now the voice of calumny?"

"If any one has ever," returned he, "so lived as to dare defy it, Miss Beverley is she: but though safe by the established purity of your character from calumny, there are other and scarce less invidious attacks, from which no one is exempt, and of which the refinement, the sensibility of your mind, will render you but the more susceptible: ridicule has shafts, and impertinence has arrows, which, though against innocence they may be levelled in vain, have always the power of wounding tranquillity."

Struck with a truth which she could not controvert, Cecilia sighed deeply, but spoke not.

"Mr. Delvile is right," said Mrs. Charlton, "and though your plan, my dear Cecilia, was certainly virtuous and proper, when you set out from Bury, the purpose of your journey must now be made so public, that it will no longer be judicious nor rational."

Delvile poured forth his warmest thanks for this friendly interposition, and then, strengthened by such an advocate, re-urged all his arguments with redoubled hope and spirit.

Cecilia, disturbed, uncertain, comfortless, could frame her mind to no resolution; she walked about the room, deliberated,—determined,—wavered and deliberated again.—Delvile then grew more urgent, and represented so strongly the various mortifications which must follow so tardy a renunciation of their intentions, that, terrified and perplexed, and fearing the breach of their union would now be more injurious to her than its ratification, she ceased all opposition to his arguments, and uttered no words but of solicitation that he would leave her.

"I will," cried he, "I will begone this very moment. Tell me but first you will think of what I have said, and refer me not to your letter, but deign yourself to pronounce my doom, when you have considered if it may not be softened."

To this she tacitly consented; and elated with fresh rising hope, he recommended his cause to the patronage of Mrs. Charlton, and then, taking leave of Cecilia, "I go," he said, "though I have yet a thousand things to propose and to supplicate, and though still in a suspense that my

temper knows ill how to endure; but I should rather be rendered miserable than happy, in merely over-powering your reason by entreaty. I leave you, therefore, to your own reflections; yet remember, and refuse not to remember with some compunction, that all chance, all possibility of earthly happiness for *me* depends upon your decision."

He then tore himself away.

Cecilia, shocked at the fatigue she had occasioned her good old friend, now compelled her to go to rest, and dedicated the remaining part of the night to uninterrupted deliberation.

It seemed once more in her power to be mistress of her destiny; but the very liberty of choice she had so much coveted, now attained, appeared the most heavy of calamities; since, uncertain even what she ought to do, she rather wished to be drawn than to lead, rather desired to be guided than to guide. She was to be responsible not only to the world but to herself for the whole of this momentous transaction, and the terror of leaving either dissatisfied, made independence burdensome, and unlimited power a grievance.

The happiness or misery which awaited her resolution were but secondary considerations in the present state of her mind; her consent to a clandestine action she lamented as an eternal blot to her character, and the undoubted publication of that consent as equally injurious to her fame. Neither retracting nor fulfilling her engagement could now retrieve what was past, and in the bitterness of regret for the error she had committed, she thought happiness unattainable for the remainder of her life.

In this gloomy despondence passed the night, her eyes never closed, her determination never formed. Morning, however, came, and upon something to fix was indispensable.

She now, therefore, finally employed herself in briefly comparing the good with the evil of giving Delvile wholly up, or becoming his for ever.

In accepting him, she was exposed to all the displeasure of his relations, and, which affected her most, to the indignant severity of his mother; but not another obstacle could be found that seemed of any weight to oppose him.

In refusing him she was liable to the derision of the

world, to sneers from strangers, and remonstrances from her friends, to becoming a topic for ridicule, if not for slander, and an object of curiosity, if not of contempt.

The ills, therefore, that threatened her marriage, though most afflicting, were least disgraceful, and those which awaited its breach, if less serious, were more mortifying.

At length, after weighing every circumstance as well as her perturbed spirits would permit, she concluded that so late to reject him must bring misery without any alleviation, while accepting him, though followed by wrath and reproach, left some opening for future hope, and some prospect of better days.

To fulfil, therefore, her engagement was her final resolution.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EVENT.

SCARCE less unhappy in her decision than in her uncertainty, and every way dissatisfied with her situation, her views and herself, Cecilia was still so distressed and uncomfortable, when Delvile called the next morning, that he could not discover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a stranger to art. "I would not, sir," she said, "keep you an instant in suspense, when I am no longer in suspense myself. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing less, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the distress of my irresolution was known to you. Even now, when I hesitate no more, my mind is so ill at ease, that I could neither wonder nor be displeased should you hesitate in your turn."

"You hesitate no more?" cried he, almost breathless at the sound of those words, "and is it possible—Oh, my Cecilia!—is it possible your resolution is in my favour?"

"Alas!" cried she, "how little is your reason to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive!"

"Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that spoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, "tell me if your

reluctance has its origin in *me*, that I may rather even yet relinquish you, than merely owe your hand to the selfishness of persecution?"

"Your pride," said she, half smiling, "has some right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myself only I am at variance, with my own weakness and want of judgment that I quarrel,——in *you* I have all the reliance that the highest opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough for the warm heart of Delvile, not only to restore peace, but to awaken rapture. He was almost as wild with delight, as he had before been with apprehension, and poured forth his acknowledgements with so much fervour of gratitude, that Cecilia imperceptibly grew reconciled to herself, and before she missed her dejection, participated in his contentment.

She quitted him as soon as she had power, to acquaint Mrs. Charlton with what had passed, and assist in preparing her to accompany them to the altar; while Delvile flew to his new acquaintance, Mr. Singleton, the lawyer, to request him to supply the place of Mr. Monckton in giving her away.

All was now hastened with the utmost expedition, and to avoid observation, they agreed to meet at the church; their desire of secresy, however potent, never urging them to wish the ceremony should be performed in a place less awful.

When the chairs, however, came, which were to carry the two ladies thither, Cecilia trembled and hung back. The greatness of her undertaking, the hazard of all her future happiness, the disgraceful secresy of her conduct, the expected reproaches of Mrs. Delvile, and the boldness and indelicacy of the step she was about to take, all so forcibly struck, and so painfully wounded her, that the moment she was summoned to set out, she again lost her resolution, and regretting the hour that ever Delvile was known to her, she sunk into a chair, and gave up her whole soul to anguish and sorrow.

The good Mrs. Charlton tried in vain to console her; a sudden horror against herself had now seized her spirits, which, exhausted by long struggles, could rally no more.

In this situation she was at length surprised by Delvile, whose uneasy astonishment that she had failed in her appointment, was only to be equalled by that with which he was struck at the sight of her tears. He demanded the cause with the utmost tenderness and apprehension. Cecilia for some time could not speak, and then, with a deep sigh "Ah!" she cried, "Mr. Delvile! how weak are we all when unsupported by our own esteem! how feeble, how inconsistent, how changeable, when our courage has any foundation but duty!"

Delvile, much relieved by finding her sadness sprung not from any new affliction, gently reproached her breach of promise, and earnestly entreated her to repair it. "The clergyman," cried he, "is waiting; I have left him with Mr. Singleton in the vestry; no new objections have started, and no new obstacles have intervened; why, then, torment ourselves with discussing again the old ones, which we have already considered till every possible argument upon them is exhausted? Tranquillize, I conjure you, your agitated spirits, and if the truest tenderness, the most animated esteem, and the gratefullest admiration, can soften your future cares, and insure your future peace, every anniversary of this day will recompense my Cecilia for every pang she now suffers!"

Cecilia, half soothed and half ashamed, finding she had in fact nothing new to say or to object, compelled herself to rise, and, penetrated by his solicitations, endeavoured to compose her mind, and promised to follow him.

He would not trust her, however, from his sight, but seizing the very instant of her renewed consent, he dismissed the chairs, and ordering a hackney coach, preferred any risk to that of her again wavering, and insisted upon accompanying her in it himself.

Cecilia had now scarce time to breathe, before she found herself at the porch of —— church. Delvile hurried her out of the carriage, and then offered his arm to Mrs. Charlton. Not a word was spoken by any of the party till they went into the vestry, where Delvile ordered Cecilia a glass of water, and having hastily made his compliments to the clergyman, gave her hand to Mr. Singleton, who led her to the altar.

The ceremony was now begun; and Cecilia, finding herself past all power of re-tracting, soon called her thoughts from wishing it, and turned her whole attention to the awful service; to which, though she listened with reverence, her full satisfaction in the object of her vows, made her listen without terror. But when the priest came to that solemn adjuration, *If any man can show any just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together*, a conscious tear stole into her eye, and a sigh escaped from Delvile that went to her heart: but, when the priest concluded the exhortation with *let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace*, a female voice at some distance, called out in shrill accents, "I do!"

The ceremony was instantly stopt. The astonished priest immediately shut up the book, to regard the intended bride and bridegroom; Delvile started with amazement to see whence the sound proceeded, and Cecilia, aghast, and struck with horror, faintly shrieked, and caught hold of Mrs. Charlton.

The consternation was general, and general was the silence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice issued: a female form at the same moment was seen rushing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickness of lightning.

Not a word was yet uttered, every one seemed rooted to the spot on which he stood, and regarding in mute wonder the place this form had crossed.

Delvile at length exclaimed, "What can this mean?"

"Did you not know the woman, sir?" said the clergyman.

"No, sir, I did not even see her."

"Nor you, madam?" said he, addressing Cecilia.

"No, sir," she answered in a voice that scarce articulated the two syllables, and changing colour so frequently, that Delvile, apprehensive she would faint, flew to her, crying out "Let *me* support you!"

She turned from him hastily, and still holding by Mrs. Charlton, moved away from the altar.

"Whither," cried Delvile, fearfully following her, "whither are you going?"

She made not any answer; but still, though tottering as

much from emotion as Mrs. Charlton from infirmity, she walked on.

"Why did you stop the ceremony, sir?" cried Delvile, impatiently speaking to the clergyman.

"No ceremony, sir," he returned, "could proceed with such an interruption."

"It has been wholly accidental," cried he, "for we neither of us know the woman, who could not have any right or authority for the prohibition." Then yet more anxiously pursuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "do you thus move off?—Why leave the ceremony unfinished?—Mrs. Charlton, what is it you are about;—Cecilia, I beseech you return, and let the service go on?"

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, still silently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs. Charlton and herself.

"This is insupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife!—why is it you thus abandon me?—Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs. Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *must* not go!"—

He now attempted to take her hand, but shrinking from his touch, in an emphatic, but low voice, she said "Yes, Sir, I must!—an interdiction such as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to somewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman? This wretch who has thus wantonly destroyed me!"

And he rushed out of the church in pursuit of her.

The clergyman and Mr. Singleton, who had hitherto been wondering spectators, came now to offer their assistance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herself, but gladly accepted their services for Mrs. Charlton, who, thunderstruck by all that had passed, seemed almost robbed of her faculties. Mr. Singleton proposed calling a hackney coach; she consented, and they stopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what she knew of the woman, who she was, and how she had got into the church? She knew of her, she answered,

nothing, but that she had come in to early prayers, and she supposed she had hid herself in a pew when they were over, as she had thought the church entirely empty.

A hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were assisting Mrs. Charlton into it, Delvile returned.

"I have pursued and enquired," cried he, "in vain; I can neither discover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going?—What does this coach do here? —Mrs. Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in silence. The shock she had received took from her all power of speech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delvile to blame, though she knew not in what, but the obscurity of her fears served only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herself, but Delvile, who could neither brook her displeasure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out "You are *mine*, you are my *wife*!—I will part with you no more, and go whithersoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

"Stop me not!" cried she, impatiently, though faintly, "I am sick, I am ill already,—if you detain me any longer, I shall be unable to support myself!"

"Oh then rest on *me!*" cried he, still holding her; "rest but upon me till the ceremony is over!—you will drive me to despair and to madness if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A crowd now began to gather, and the words bride and bridegroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with shame, with fear, and with distress, hastily said "you are determined to make me miserable!" and snatching away her hand, which Delvile at those words could no longer hold, she threw herself into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up the glasses, with a look of fierceness at the mob.

Cecilia had neither spirits nor power to resist him; yet, offended by his violence, and shocked to be thus publicly pursued by him, her looks spoke a resentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, passionately, "to desert me at the very altar!—to cast me off at the instant the most sacred rites were uniting us!—and then thus to look at me!—to treat me with this disdain at a time of such distraction!—to scorn me thus injuriously at the moment you unjustly abandon me!—"

"To how dreadful a scene," said Cecilia, recovering from her consternation, "have you exposed me! to what shame, what indignity, what irreparable disgrace!"

"Oh, heaven!" cried he, with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occasioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch so culpable as myself, nor one who will sooner allow the justice of your rigour! my veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have suffered any indignity, I should soon abhor myself as you seem to abhor me. But what is it I have done? How have I thus incensed you! By what action, by what guilt have I incurred this displeasure?"

"Whence," cried she, "came that voice which still vibrates in my ear? The prohibition could not be on *my* account, since none to whom I am known have either right or interest in even wishing it."

"What an inference is this! Over *me*, then, do you conclude this woman had any power?"

Here they stopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully disturbed, hastily past him, and ran up stairs; but Mrs. Charlton refused not his arm, on which she lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her servant, and gave orders that a post chaise might be sent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn; but suppressing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly said, "Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at least, before we part, to be more explicit in your accusation, and tell me if indeed it is possible you can suspect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for such an action?"

"I know not what to suspect," said Cecilia, "where everything is thus involved in obscurity; but I must own I should have some difficulty to think those words the effect

of chance, or to credit that their speaker was concealed without design."

"You are right, then, madam," cried he, resentfully, "to discard me! to treat me with contempt, to banish me without repugnance, since I see you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have said I shall make you miserable,—no, madam, no! your happiness and misery depend not upon one you hold so worthless!"

"On whatever they depend," said Cecilia, "I am too little at ease for discussion. I would no more be daring than superstitious, but none of our proceedings have prospered, and since their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs. Charlton, our chaise is coming; you will be ready, I hope, to set off in it directly?"

Delvile, too angry to trust himself to speak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himself: but so little was his success, that though silent till the chaise was announced, when he heard that dreaded sound, and saw Cecilia steady in her purpose of departing, he was so much shocked and afflicted, that, clasping his hands in a transport of passion and grief, he exclaimed "This, then, Cecilia, is your faith! this is the felicity you bid me hope! this is the recompense of my sufferings, and the performance of your engagement!"[1]

[1] "'Well, but,' cried he," (Colonel Digby) "laughing, 'may I find a fault? Will you hear a criticism?'...He told me then, there was one thing he wholly disallowed, and wished to dispute, which was, Cecilia's refusing to be married on account of the anonymous prohibition to the ceremony. He could not, he said, think such an implied distrust of Delvile, after consenting to be his, was fair or generous.

"'To that,' cried I, 'I cannot judge what a man may think, but I will own it is what most precisely and indubitably I could not have resisted doing myself. An interruption so mysterious and so shocking I could never have had the courage to pass over.'

"This answer rather silenced him from politeness than convinced him from reason, for I found he thought the woman who had given her promise was already married, and ought to run every risk rather than show the smallest want of confidence in the man of her choice.

"I could have said more upon the peculiar situation of the already reluctant and distressed Cecilia, but I feared he might think I defended

Cecilia, struck by these reproaches, turned back; but while she hesitated how to answer them, he went on. "You are insensible to my misery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a secret enemy has had power to make me odious in your sight, though for her enmity I can assign no cause, though even her existence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and most willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture than in all you have observed of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are disposed to believe me criminal; without deigning to say wherefore, you are eager to banish me your presence. Yet scarce could a consciousness of guilt itself wound me so forcibly, so keenly, as your suspecting I am guilty!"

"Again, then," cried Cecilia, "shall I subject myself to a scene of such disgrace and horror? No, never!——The punishment of my error shall at least secure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches, I deserve not your regard; cease, therefore, to profess any for me, or make them no more."

"Show but to them," cried he, "the smallest sensibility, show but for me the most distant concern, and I will try to bear my disappointment without murmuring, and submit to your decrees as to those from which there is no appeal: but to wound without deigning even to look at what you destroy,—to shoot at random those arrows that are pointed with poison,—to see them fasten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold disdain,—Oh, where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia! where the justice, the equity, I believed a part of herself!"

"After all that has past," said Cecilia, sensibly touched by his distress, "I expected not these complaints, nor that, from me, any assurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our separation——"

"Oh, fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what on earth

rather the composition than the circumstance; and to have repaid the frankness of his objection by a tenacious justification might have prevented similar fair dealing from him in future."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 197, vol. iv.

can quiet my mind that leads to our separation?—Give to me no condescension with any such view,—preserve your indifference, persevere in your coldness, triumph still in your power of inspiring those feelings you can never return,—all, everything is more supportable than to talk of our separation!"

"Yet, how," cried she, "parted, torn asunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?"

"Trust in my honour! Show me but the confidence which I will venture to say I deserve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!"

"Good heaven, what a request! faith so implicit would be frenzy!"

"You doubt, then, my integrity? You suspect——"

"Indeed I do not; yet in a case of such importance, what ought to guide me but my own reason, my own conscience, my own sense of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, distress me no more with entreaties, when I solemnly declare that no earthly consideration shall ever again make me promise you my hand, while the terror of Mrs. Delvile's displeasure has possession of my heart. And now adieu."

"You give me, then, up?"

"Be patient, I beseech you; and attempt not to follow me; 'tis a step I cannot permit."

"Not follow you? And who has power to prevent me?"

"*I* have, sir; if to incur my endless resentment is of any consequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined steadiness, moved on; Mrs. Charlton, assisted by the servants, being already upon the stairs.

"O, tyranny!" cried he, "what submission is it you exact!—May I not even enquire into the dreadful mystery of this morning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And may I not acquaint you with it, should it be discovered?"

"I shall not be sorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the stairs; when, losing all forbearance, he hastily flew after her, and endeavouring to

stop her, called out, "If you do not hate and detest me,—if I am not loathsome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus insensibly!—Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia!—speak to me, at least, one word of less severity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for-ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a starting tear showed her sympathetic distress, said, "Why will you thus oppress me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"*Have* thought?—Oh, Cecilia!—is it then all over?"

"Pray suffer me to go quietly, and fear not I shall go too happily! Suppress your own feelings, rather than seek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occasion!——Oh, Mr. Delvile! were our connexion opposed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no necessity of disguise,—you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not suspect me of insensibility,—Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and all I now blush to feel, I should openly and with pride acknowledge!"

She then hurried to the chaise, Delvile pursuing her with thanks and blessings, and gratefully assuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions, and not even attempt to see her, till he could bring her some intelligence concerning the morning's transaction.

The chaise then drove off.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious: Mrs. Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unusual hurry and exercise both of mind and body which she had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very slowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, was in no haste to proceed: she was going to no one she wished to see, she was wholly without expectation of meeting with any thing that could

give her pleasure. The unfortunate expedition in which she had been engaged left her now nothing but regret, and only promised her in future sorrow and mortification.

Mrs. Charlton, after her return home, still continued ill, and Cecilia, who constantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indisposition to herself. Everything she thought conspired to punish the error she had committed; her proceedings were discovered, though her motives were unknown; the Delvile family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed she was wholly without ability to divine, yet her surmises were not more fruitless than various. At one moment she imagined it some frolic of Morrice, at another some perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of some stranger to them all. But none of these suppositions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and pursued them to the church, which his inquisitive impertinence made by no means impossible, could yet hardly have had either time or opportunity to engage any woman in so extraordinary an undertaking; Mr. Monckton, however averse to the connection, she considered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner so alarming and disgraceful; and mischief so wanton in any stranger, seemed to require a share of unfeeling effrontery which could fall to the lot of so few as to make this suggestion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes she imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to some woman, who, having accidentally discovered his intentions, took this desperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a short-lived thought, and speedily gave way to her esteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmness of his probity.

All, therefore, was dark and mysterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was useless. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miserable; she could only be steady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herself, and only find consolation in believing him, also, as blameless.

Three days passed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs. Charlton; her thoughts all engrossed upon her own situation: but upon the fourth day she was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who desired to speak with her.

She presently went down stairs,—and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs. Delvile!

Seized with astonishment and fear, she stopt short, and, looking aghast, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive so unexpected and unwelcome a visitor, by an internal sensation of guilt, mingled with a dread of discovery and reproach.

Mrs. Delvile, addressing her with the coldest politeness, said, "I fear I have surprised you; I am sorry I had not time to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you."

Cecilia, then, moving from the door, faintly answered, "I cannot, madam, but be honoured by your notice, whenever you are pleased to confer it."

They then sat down; Mrs. Delvile preserving an air the most formal and distant, and Cecilia half sinking with apprehensive dismay.

After a short and ill-boding silence, "I mean not," said Mrs. Delvile, "to embarrass or distress you; I will not, therefore, keep you in suspense of the purport of my visit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your sincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy; I dispense with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to solve: I *know* what has passed; I *know* that my son loves you."

Not all her secret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect so direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the shock of it with any composure: she could not speak, she could not look at Mrs. Delvile; she arose, and walked to the window, without knowing what she was doing.

Here, however, her distress was not likely to diminish; for the first sight she saw was Fidel, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God! Fidel here!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and sunk into a chair.

Mrs. Delvile for a few minutes was silent; and then, following her, said, "Imagine not I am making any discovery, nor suspect me of any design to develop your sentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed; that Miss Beverley, possessing so much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought possible. I mean not, therefore, to solicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myself, and your permission to speak to you with openness and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmness from all apprehension of reproach, found in her manner a coldness that convinced her of the loss of her affection, and in the introduction to her business a solemnity that assured her what she should decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to show her respectful attention, but she could not raise it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs. Delvile then seated herself next her, and gravely continued her discourse.

"Miss Beverley, however little acquainted with the state of our family affairs, can scarcely have been uninformed that a fortune such as hers seems almost all that family can desire; nor can she have failed to observe, that her merit and accomplishments have nowhere been more felt and admired: the choice, therefore, of Mortimer she could not doubt would have our sanction, and when she honoured his proposals with her favour, she might naturally conclude she gave happiness and pleasure to all his friends."

Cecilia, superior to accepting a palliation of which she felt herself undeserving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herself to speak, said, "No, madam, I will not deceive you, [illegible] never been deceived myself: I presumed not to [illegible] approbation,—though in missing it I have for [illegible] own!"

"[illegible]imer, then," cried she with eagerness, "[illegible] able? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed [illegible]

[illegible] said she, blushing, "I have nothing to [illegible]"

"[illegible]ed my son!" cried Mrs. Delvile, with [illegible]n treacherous to you, while disobedient [illegible]bly renounced him."

Cecilia, who now seemed the only culprit, felt herself in a state of humiliation not to be borne; she collected, therefore, all her courage, and said, "I have cleared Mr. Delvile; permit me, madam, now, to say something for myself."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by speaking without disguise."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion,—that, I see, is lost!—but merely—"

"No, not lost," said Mrs. Delvile, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own, in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

"Ah, then," thought Cecilia, "all is over! the contempt I so much feared is incurred, and though it may be softened, it can never be removed!"

"Speak, then, and with sincerity," she continued, "all you wish me to hear, and then grant me your attention in return to the purpose of my present journey."

"I have little, madam," answered the depressed Cecilia, "to say; you tell me you already know all that has past; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it: I will only add, that my consent to this transaction has made me miserable almost from the moment I gave it; that I meant and wished to retract as soon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumstances the most perverse, not blindness to propriety, nor stubbornness in wrong, led me to make, at last, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my last hour, must fill me with regret and shame."

"I wonder not," said Mrs. Delvile, "that in a situation where delicacy was so much less requisite than [redacted] Miss Beverley should feel herself distressed and [redacted] A mind such as hers could never err with im[redacted] it is solely from a certainty of her innate so[redacted] that I venture to wait upon her now, and th[redacted] hope to influence *her* upon whose influence [redacted] family must in future depend. Shall I [redacted] there anything you wish to say first?"

"No, madam, nothing."

"Hear me, then, I beg of you, with [redacted] to disregard me, but with an equitabl[redacted]

"My son, the supporter of our house, the sole guardian of its name, and the heir of our united fortunes, has selected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and so fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquish us all in preference to subduing them. To yourself alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you—"

"O, hold, madam, hold!" interrupted Cecilia, whose courage now revived from resentment, "I know what you would say; you come to tell me of your disdain; you come to reproach my presumption, and to kill me with your contempt! There is little occasion for such a step; I am depressed, I am self-condemned already; spare me, therefore, this insupportable humiliation, wound me not with your scorn, oppress me not with your superiority! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleness as readily as you can despise it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it!"

"Believe me," said Mrs. Delvile, "I meant not to hurt or offend you, and I am sorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or assuming. The peculiar and perilous situation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offensive expressions, and made me guilty myself of an ostentation which in others has often disgusted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the test of experiment, when tried upon those subjects which call forth our particular propensities. We may strive to be disinterested, we may struggle to be impartial, but self will still predominate, still show us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowness of our souls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional insolence, and imagine not that in speaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours: on the contrary, I know it to be respectable; I know, too, that were it the lowest in the kingdom, the first might envy it that it gave birth to such a daughter."

Cecilia, somewhat soothed by this speech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and she proceeded.

"To your family, then, I assure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted,

to reason, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not easy, indeed, is such a task, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination,—"

"You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, "my mind harbours no such intention, it has no desire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a consciousness of having failed in it! I pine, I sicken to recover my own good opinion; I should then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I should at least lose this cruel depression that now sinks me in your presence!"

"To regain it," said Mrs. Delvile, "were to exercise but half your power, which at this moment enables you, if such is your wish, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condescend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia started at the question; her heart beat quick with struggling passions; she saw the sacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, arose high to anticipate the rejection; but the design was combated by her affections, which opposed the indignant rashness, and told her that one hasty speech might separate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs. Delvile patiently waited the issue, she answered, with much hesitation, "To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly as I value it,—is what I now scarcely dare hope."

"Say not so," cried she, "since, if you hope, you cannot miss it. I purpose to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I shall think myself your debtor if you refuse not to employ them."

She stopt; but Cecilia hung back; fearful of her own strength, she dared venture at no professions; yet, [illegible] either to support, or dispute her compliance, she dreaded to think.

"I come to you, then," Mrs. Delvile solemnly resumed, "in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Consider me as its representative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common address.

your character has our highest esteem, and your fortune exceeds even our most sanguine desires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all these requisites for the satisfaction of prudence, nor all these allurements for the gratification of happiness, can suffice to fulfil or to silence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for redress, should their noble and long unsullied name be voluntarily consigned to oblivion."

Cecilia, extremely struck by these words, scarce wondered, since so strong and so established were her opinions, that the obstacle to her marriage, though but one, should be considered as insuperable.

"Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averse," she continued, "but simply to our own more partial. To sink that, indeed, in *any* other, were base and unworthy:—what, then, must be the shock of my disappointment, should Mortimer Delvile, the darling of my hopes, the last survivor of his house, in whose birth I rejoiced as the promise of its support, in whose accomplishments I gloried, as the revival of its lustre,—should *he*, should *my* son be the first to abandon it! to give up the name he seemed born to make live, and to cause in effect its utter annihilation!—Oh, how should I know my son when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cherished in my bosom the betrayer of its dearest interests, the destroyer of its very existence!"

Cecilia, scarce more afflicted than offended, now hastily answered, "Not for me, madam, shall he commit this crime, not on *my* account shall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cause of unworthiness or guilt in him to be mistress of the universe!"

"Nobly said!" cried Mrs. Delvile, her eyes sparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleasure, "now

again do I know Miss Beverley! now again see the refined, the excellent young woman, whose virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happiness, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; she scarce knew herself what she had said, but, she found by Mrs. Delvile's construction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquishing of her son. She ardently wished to quit the room before she was called upon to confirm the sentence, but she had not courage to make the effort, nor to rise, speak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs. Delvile, whose coldness and austerity were changed into mildness and compassion, "at the necessity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence so painful; but no other resource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous consent, since I regard him myself as bound to you in honour, and only to be released by your own virtuous desire. I will leave you, however, for my presence, I see, is oppressive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I have nothing, madam," said Cecilia, coldly, "to forgive; you have only asserted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myself, for having given you occasion."

"Alas," cried Mrs. Delvile, "if worth and nobleness of soul on your part, if esteem and tenderest affection on mine, were all which that dignity which offends you requires, how should I crave the blessing of such a daughter! how rejoice in joining my son to excellence so like his own, and ensuring his happiness while I stimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," said Cecilia, turning away from her, "whatever you had for me is past, —even your esteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not so abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs. Delvile, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, "little do you see the state of my heart, for never have you appeared to me so worthy as at this

moment! In tearing you from my son, I partake all the wretchedness I give, but your own sense of duty must something plead for the strictness with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," said Cecilia, struggling to disguise her inward anguish under an appearance of sullenness, "in waiting?"

Mrs. Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes glistened with tears, said, "To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart so warmly admires you, is almost more than I can endure. Oh, gentlest Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this severity, who performing what she holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bitterest misfortune, who foresees in the rage of her husband, and the resistance of her son, all the misery of domestic contention, and who can only secure the honour of her family by destroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—"

Cecilia, who had affected not to see that she waited for it, now coldly put it out, distantly curtseying, and seeking to preserve her steadiness by avoiding to speak. Mrs. Delvile took it, and as she repeated her adieu, affectionately pressed it to her lips; Cecilia, starting, and breathing short, from encreasing yet smothered agitation, called out, "Why, why this condescension?—pray,—I entreat you, madam!—"

"Heaven bless you, my love!" said Mrs. Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand she still held, "heaven bless you, and restore the tranquillity you so nobly deserve!"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, vainly striving to repress any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, "why will you break my heart with this kindness! why will you still compel me to love,—when now I almost wish to hate you!—"

"No, hate me not," said Mrs. Delvile, kissing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, "hate me not, sweetest Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle bosom, I am almost detestable to myself. Even the cruel scene which awaits me with my son will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu,—I must now prepare for him!"

She then left the room: but Cecilia, whose pride had no power to resist this tenderness, ran hastily after her, saying, "Shall I not see you again, madam?"

"You shall yourself decide," answered she; "if my coming will not give you more pain than pleasure, I will wait upon you whenever you please."

Cecilia sighed and paused; she knew not what to desire, yet rather wished anything to be done than quietly to sit down to uninterrupted reflection.

"Shall I postpone quitting this place," continued Mrs. Delvile, "till to-morrow morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, should I call upon you again?"

"I should be sorry," said she, still hesitating, "to detain you,—"

"You will rejoice me," cried Mrs. Delvile, "by bearing me in your sight."

And she then went into her carriage.

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the task of explaining to her the cruel scene in which she had just been engaged, then hastened to her own apartment. Her hitherto stifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating; she was openly rejected by the family whose alliance she was known to wish; she was compelled to refuse the man of her choice, though satisfied his affections were her own. A misery so peculiar she found hard to support, and almost bursting with conflicting passions, her heart alternately swelled from offended pride, and sunk from disappointed tenderness

CHAPTER IX.

A PERTURBATION.

CECILIA was still in this tempestuous state, when a message was brought her that a gentleman was below stairs, who begged to have the honour of seeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what must so bitterly afflict him, redoubled her distress, and she went down in an agony of perturbation and sorrow.

He met her at the door, where, before he could speak, "Mr. Delvile," she cried, in a hurrying manner, "why will you come? Why will you thus insist upon seeing me, in defiance of every obstacle, and in contempt of my prohibition?"

"Good heavens!" cried he, amazed, "whence this reproach? Did you not permit me to wait upon you with the result of my enquiries? Had I not your consent—but why do you look thus disturbed?—your eyes are red,—you have been weeping.—Oh, my Cecilia! have *I* any share in your sorrow?—Those tears, which never flow weakly, tell me, have they—has *one* of them been shed upon my account?"

"And what," cried she, "has been the result of your enquiries?—Speak quick, for I wish to know,—and in another instant I must be gone."

"How strange," cried the astonished Delvile, "is this language! how strange are these looks! What now has come to pass? Has any fresh calamity happened? Is there yet some evil which I do not expect?"

"Why will you not answer first?" cried she; "when I have spoken, you will perhaps be less willing."

"You terrify, you shock, you amaze me! What dreadful blow awaits me? For what horror are you preparing me?—That which I have just experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, still remains inexplicable, still continues to be involved in darkness and

mystery; for the wretch who separated us I have never been able to discover."

"Have you procured, then, no intelligence?"

"No, none; though since we parted I have never rested a moment."

"Make, then, no further enquiry, for now all explanation would be useless. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot tell: but that again we shall ever meet—"

She stopt; her streaming eyes cast upwards, and a deep sigh bursting from her heart.

"Oh, what," cried Delvile, endeavouring to take her hand, which she hastily withdrew from him, "what does this mean? loveliest, dearest Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced wife! why flow those tears which agony only can wring from you?—Why refuse me that hand which so lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the same Delvile to whom so few days since you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus distrust his honour, and repulse his tenderness? Oh, why, giving him such exquisite misery, refuse him the smallest consolation?"

"What consolation," cried the weeping Cecilia, "can I give? Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who most want it!—"

Here the door was opened by one of the Miss Charltons, who came into the room with a message from her grandmother, requesting to see Cecilia. Cecilia, ashamed of being thus surprised with Delvile, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuse to him, or any answer to Miss Charlton, but instantly hurried out of the room;—not, however, to her old friend, whom now less than ever she could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very short indulgence of grief was succeeded by the severest examination of her own conduct.

A retrospection of this sort rarely brings much subject of exultation, when made with the rigid sincerity of secret impartiality: so much stronger is our reason than our virtue, so much higher our sense of duty than our performance!

All she had done she now repented, all she had said she disapproved; her conduct, seldom equal to her notions of right, was now infinitely below them, and the reproaches of

her judgment made her forget for awhile the afflictions which had misled it.

The sorrow to which she had openly given way in the presence of Delvile, though their total separation but the moment before had been finally decreed, she considered as a weak effusion of tenderness, injurious to delicacy, and censurable by propriety. "His power over my heart," cried she, "it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over my understanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and since I made it to his mother, it must never, without her consent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and regard for myself, equally command me to fly him, till I cease to be thus affected by his sight."

When Delvile, therefore, sent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her presence, she returned for answer that she was not well, and could not see anybody.

He then left the house, and in a few minutes she received the following note from him.

To Miss Beverley.

YOU drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with suspense, and distracted with apprehension,—you drive me from you, certain of my misery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may! I would call you unfeeling, but that I saw you were unhappy; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were swoln with weeping! I go, therefore, I obey the harsh mandate, since my absence is your desire, and I will shut myself up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet disdain not to reflect that every instant will seem endless, while Cecilia must appear to me unjust, or wound my very soul by the recollection of her in sorrow.

Mortimer Delvile.

The mixture of fondness and resentment with which this letter was dictated, marked so strongly the sufferings and disordered state of the writer, that all the softness of Cecilia returned when she perused it, and left her not a wish but to lessen his inquietude, by assurances of unalterable re-

gard; yet she determined not to trust herself in his sight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conscious that a participation of sorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderness. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to resist her inclination, she resolved to commit the whole affair to the will of Mrs. Delvile, to whom, though under no promise, she now considered herself responsible. Desirous, however, to shorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, she would not wait till the time she had appointed to see his mother, but wrote the following note to hasten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs. DELVILE.

Madam,

Your son is now at Bury; shall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourself? Inform me of your desire, and I will endeavour to fulfil it. As my own agent I regard myself no longer; if, as yours, I can give pleasure, or be of service, I shall gladly receive your commands. I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient servant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When she had sent off this letter, her heart was more at ease, because reconciled with her conscience: she had sacrificed the son, she had resigned herself to the mother; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by suffering the sacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquillity in virtue, by making the resignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the mist of passion was dispersed, she recollected with confusion her cold and sullen behaviour to Mrs. Delvile. That lady had but done what she had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than she had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her visit, and while doubtful of its success, she had, indeed, been austere, but the moment victory appeared in view, she became tender, affectionate, and gentle. Her justice, therefore, condemned the resentment to which she had given way, and she fortified her mind for the interview which was to follow, by an earnest desire to [illegible]e

reparation both to Mrs. Delvile and herself for that which was past.

In this resolution she was not a little strengthened, by seriously considering with herself the great abatement to all her possible happiness, which must have been made by the humiliating circumstance of forcing herself into a family which held all connection with her as disgraceful. She desired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon such terms, for the more she esteemed and admired him, the more anxious she became for his honour, and the less could she endure being regarded herself as the occasion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct settled, with calmer spirits, though a heavy heart, she attended upon Mrs. Charlton; but fearing to lose the steadiness she had just acquired before it should be called upon, if she trusted herself to relate the decision which had been made, she besought her for the present to dispense with the account, and then forced herself into conversation upon less interesting subjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquillity she heard Mrs. Delvile again announced, and waited upon her in the parlour with an air of composure.

Not so did Mrs. Delvile receive her; she was all eagerness and emotion; she flew to her the moment she appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed, "Oh, charming girl! Saver of our family! preserver of our honour! How poor are words to express my admiration! how inadequate are thanks in return for such obligations as I owe you!"

"You owe me none, madam," said Cecilia, suppressing a sigh; "on *my* side will be all the obligation, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

"Call not by so harsh a name," answered Mrs. Delvile, "the keenness of a sensibility by which you have yourself alone been the sufferer. You have had a trial the most severe, and however able to sustain, it was impossible you should not feel it. That you should give up *any* man whose friends solicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generosity in submitting, unasked, the arrangement of that resignation to those for whose interest

it is made, and your high sense of honour in holding yourself accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promise, mark a greatness of mind which calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praise half so much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applause but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by curtseying; and Mrs. Delvile, having seated herself next her, continued her speech.

"My son, you have the goodness to tell me, is here—have you seen him?"

"Yes, madam," answered she, blushing, "but hardly for a moment."

"And he knows not of my arrival?"

"No,—I believe he certainly does not."

"Sad, then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I must perform. Do you expect to see him again?"

"No,—yes,—perhaps——indeed, I hardly"—

She stammered, and Mrs. Delvile, taking her hand, said, "Tell me, Miss Beverley, *why* should you see him again?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this question, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not answer.

"Consider," continued Mrs. Delvile, "the *purpose* of any further meeting; your union is impossible, you have nobly consented to relinquish all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his, by an intercourse which seems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitless and unavailing sorrow?"

Cecilia was still silent; the truth of the expostulation her reason acknowledged, but to assent to its consequence her whole heart refused.

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," said Mrs. Delvile, "is far, I am sure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find consolation from lessening than from embittering his sufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me, honestly, judiciously, candidly tell me,—will it not be wiser and more right, to avoid rather than seek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no sensations but of misery and sadness?"

Cecilia then turned pale, she endeavoured to speak, but could not; she wished to comply,—yet to think she had seen him for the last time, to remember how abruptly she had parted from him, and to fear she had treated him unkindly;—these were obstacles which opposed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," said Mrs. Delvile, after a pause, "can you wish to see Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you desire he should see you, only to sharpen his affliction at your loss?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, to whom this reproof restored speech and resolution, "I am not so despicable, I am not, I hope, so unworthy!—I will be ruled by you wholly; I will commit to you everything;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!——

"Ah, my dear Miss Beverley! to meet confessedly for *once*,—what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer? What were it but infusing poison into your own?"

"If you think so, madam," said she, "I had better—I will certainly—" she sighed, stammered, and stopt.

"Hear me," cried Mrs. Delvile, "and rather let me try to convince than persuade you. Were there any possibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obstacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might discussion turn to account, and an interchange of sentiments be productive of some happy expedient: but here—"

She hesitated, and Cecilia, shocked and ashamed, turned away her face, and cried "I know, madam, what you would say,—here all is over! and therefore—"

"Yet suffer me," interrupted she, "to be explicit, since we speak upon this matter now for the last time. Here, then, I say, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce? Mischief of every sort, pain, horror, and repining! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his misery; mistaken notion! Nothing could so greatly augment it. All his passions would be raised, all his prudence would be extin-

guished, his soul would be torn with resentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previously he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourself—"

"Talk not, madam, of *me*," cried the unhappy Cecilia, "what you say of your son is sufficient, and I will yield—"

"Yet hear me," proceeded she, "and believe me not so unjust as to consider him alone; you, also, would be an equal, though a less stormy sufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would soothe your uneasiness, and that to take of him a farewell, would soften the pain of the separation: how false such reasoning! how dangerous such consolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more, your heart would be all softness and grief, and at the very moment when tenderness should be banished from your intercourse, it would bear down all opposition of judgment, spirit, and dignity: you would hang upon every word, because every word would seem the last, every look, every expression would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting distress would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be erased."

"Enough, enough," said Cecilia, "I will not see him,—I will not even desire it!"

"Is this compliance or conviction? Is what I have said true, or only terrifying?"

"Both, both! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me.—I see you are right,—and I thank you, madam, for saving me from a scene I might so cruelly have rued."

"Oh, daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs. Delvile, rising and embracing her, "noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia! what tie, what connection, could make you more dear to me? Who is there like you? Who half so excellent? So open to reason, so ingenuous in error! so rational! so just! so feeling, yet so wise!"

"You are very good," said Cecilia, with a forced serenity, "and I am thankful that your resentment for the past obstructs not your lenity for the present."

"Alas, my love, how shall I resent the past, when I ought myself to have foreseen this calamity! and *I should* have

foreseen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our security. Else had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my son's. You were just, indeed, the woman he had least chance to resist, you were precisely the character to seize his very soul. To a softness the most fatally alluring, you join a dignity which rescues from their own contempt even the most humble of your admirers. You seem born to have all the world wish your exaltation, and no part of it murmur at your superiority. Were any obstacle but this insuperable one in the way, should nobles, nay, should princes offer their daughters to my election, I would reject without murmuring the most magnificent proposals, and take in triumph to my heart my son's nobler choice!"

"Oh madam," cried Cecilia, "talk not to me thus!—speak not such flattering words!—ah, rather scorn and upbraid me, tell me you despise my character, my family and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!"

"Pardon me, sweetest girl, if I have awakened those emotions you so wisely seek to subdue. May my son but emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue shall be the solace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own satisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs. Delvile left the house, nature resumed her rights and the sorrow of her heart was no longer disguised or repressed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomiest cloud of her misery, and secretly flattered her that its dispersion was possible, though distant: but that ray was extinct, that hope was no more; she had solemnly promised to banish Delvile her sight, and his mother had absolutely declared that even the subject had been discussed for the last time.

Mrs. Charlton, impatient of some explanation of the morning's transactions, soon sent again to beg Cecilia would come to her. Cecilia reluctantly obeyed, for she feared encreasing her indisposition by the intelligence she had to

communicate; she struggled, therefore, to appear to her with tolerable calmness, and in briefly relating what had passed, forebore to mingle with the narrative her own feelings and unhappiness.

Mrs. Charlton heard the account with the utmost concern; she accused Mrs. Delvile of severity, and even of cruelty; she lamented the strange accident by which the marriage ceremony had been stopt, and regretted that it had not again been begun, as the only means to have rendered ineffectual the present fatal interposition.

But the grief of Cecilia, however violent, induced her not to join in this regret: she mourned only the obstacle which had occasioned the separation, and not the incident which had merely interrupted the ceremony: convinced, by the conversations in which she had just been engaged, of Mrs. Delvile's inflexibility, she rather rejoiced than repined that she had put it to no nearer trial: sorrow was all she felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour resentment against a conduct which she saw was dictated by a sense of right, and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the personal kindness which had softened the rejection, and the many marks of esteem and regard which had shown her it was lamented, though considered as indispensable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs. Delvile she knew not; but the discovery was nothing less than surprising, since, by various unfortunate accidents, it was known to so many, and since, in the horror and confusion of the mysterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delvile nor herself had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witnesses of that scene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which must almost necessarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary and too singular to have any chance of suppression.

During this conversation, one of the servants came to inform Cecilia that a man was below to enquire if there was no answer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly distressed, knew not upon what to resolve; that the patience of Delvile should be exhausted

she did not, indeed, wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almost her only wish; she would therefore instantly have written to him, confessed her sympathy in his sufferings, and besought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withstood: but she was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, she feared it would be dishonourable to take any step in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore, a message that she had yet no answer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himself, and sent up an earnest request for permission to see her.

Here, at least, she had no perplexity; an interview she had given her positive word to refuse, and therefore, without a moment's hesitation, she bid the servant inform him she was particularly engaged, and sorry it was not in her power to see any company.

In the greatest perturbation he left the house, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

To Miss Beverley.

I entreat you to see me! if only for an instant, I entreat, I implore you to see me! Mrs. Charlton may be present ——all the world, if you wish it, may be present,—but deny me not admission, I supplicate, I conjure you!

I will call in an hour; in that time you may have finished your present engagement. I will otherwise wait longer, and call again. You will not, I think, turn me from your door, and, till I have seen you, I can only live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited not for any answer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inexpressible: she saw, by its style, how much Delvile was irritated, and her knowledge of his temper made her certain his irritation proceeded from believing himself ill-used. She ardently wished to appease and to quiet him, and regretted the necessity of appearing obdurate and unfeeling even more, at that moment, than the separation itself. To a mind

priding in its purity, and animated in its affections, few sensations can excite keener misery, than those by which an apprehension is raised of being thought worthless or ungrateful by the objects of our chosen regard. To be deprived of their society is less bitter, to be robbed of our own tranquillity by any other means is less afflicting.

Yet to this it was necessary to submit, or incur the only penalty, which, to such a mind, would be more severe, self-reproach: she had promised to be governed by Mrs. Delvile; she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet *to turn*, as he expressed himself, *from the door*, a man who, but for an incident the most incomprehensible, would now have been sole master of herself and her actions, seemed so unkind and so tyrannical, that she could not endure to be within hearing of his repulse: she begged, therefore, the use of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a visit to Mrs. Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite satisfied in going to the house of Mr. Arnott, but she had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which still greater might not be started.

She wrote a short letter to Mrs. Delvile, acquainting her with her purpose, and its reason, and repeating her assurances, that she would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs. Charlton, whom she left to the care of her grand-daughters, she got into a chaise, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horse, and ordered the postillion to drive to Mr. Arnott's.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

A COTTAGE.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before she arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr. Arnott's house, the postillion, in turning too suddenly from the turnpike to the cross-road, overset the carriage. The accident, however, occasioned no other mischief than delaying their proceeding, and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaise unhurt. The servants, assisted by a man who was walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too busy within to be attentive to what passed without, disregarded what went forward, till she heard her footman call for help. She then hastily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the passenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately slipped his foot under one of the wheels, and so much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

Cecilia immediately desired that the sufferer might be carried to his own home in the chaise, while she and the maid walked on to Mr. Arnott's, attended by her servant on horseback.

This little incident proved of singular service to her upon first entering the house; Mrs. Harrel was at supper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, hastened with the extremest surprise to enquire what had occasioned so late a visit; followed by Mr. Arnott, whose amazement was accompanied with a thousand other sensations too powerful for speech. Cecilia unprepared

excuse, instantly related the adventure she had met with on the road, which quieted their curiosity, by turning their attention to her personal safety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to rest with all speed, and postpone any further account till the next day. With this request she most gladly complied, happy to be spared the embarrassment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of conversation.

Her night was restless and miserable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppose his mother was her incessant wish. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refusing to see him, and at least to suffer nothing new from her own enterprise or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs. Harrel came to see her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refused, she was thus suddenly arrived without any; and she was still more eager to talk of herself, and relate the weary life she led, thus shut up in the country, and confined to the society of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate answer to her questions, and Mrs. Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearse her own complaints, soon forgot that she had asked any, and, in a very short time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herself the only subject upon which they conversed.

But not such was the selfishness of Mr. Arnott; and Cecilia, when she went down to breakfast, perceived with the utmost concern that he had passed a night as sleepless as her own. A visit so sudden, so unexpected, and so unaccountable, from an object that no discouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a subject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and fears which had lately, though still unextinguished, lain dormant. The enquiries however, which his sister had given up, he ventured not to renew, and thought himself but too happy in her presence, whatever might be the cause of her visit.

He perceived, however, immediately, the sadness that [illegible] upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the [illegible]rs. Harrel, also, saw that she looked ill, but attri-

buted it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a similar accident would have made her ill herself, or fancy that she was so.

During breakfast, Cecilia sent for the postillion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whose good-natured assistance in their distress had been so unfortunate to himself. He answered that he had turned out to be a day-labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herself and friends than uninteresting conversation, she proposed that they should all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him some amends for the injury he had received. This was readily assented to, and the postillion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, situated upon a common; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her husband, and was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned she; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with last night?"

"It was not him, madam," said the woman, "met with the accident, it was John; there he is, working in the garden."

To the garden they all went, and saw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he arose, and, without speaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk, away.

"I am sorry, master," said Cecilia, "that you are so much hurt. Have you had anything put to your foot?"

The man made no answer, but still turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next instant he fixed upon the ground, startled her; she moved round to look at him again,—and perceived Mr. Belfield!

"Good God!" she exclaimed; but seeing him still retreat, she recollected in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and, suffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the house.

As soon as the first emotion of her surprise was over, she

enquired how long *John* had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life.

The woman answered he had only been with them a week, and went out to day-labour with her husband.

Cecilia then, finding their stay kept him from his employment, and willing to save him the distress of being seen by Mr. Arnott or Mrs. Harrel, proposed their returning home. She grieved most sincerely at beholding in so melancholy an occupation a young man of such talents and abilities; she wished much to assist him, and began considering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at some distance called out, "Madam! Miss Beverley!" and, looking round, to her utter amazement she saw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She instantly stopt, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he sought not to be disguised.

Surprised at this sudden change of behaviour, she then stept forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends: but when they came up to each other, she checked her desire of speaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himself known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of assumed gaiety and ease, but the deep scarlet that tinged his whole face manifested his internal confusion; and in a voice that attempted to sound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneasiness and distress, he exclaimed, with a forced smile, "Is it possible Miss Beverley can deign to notice a poor miserable day-labourer such as I am? how will she be justified in the beau monde, when even the sight of such a wretch ought to fill her with horror? Henceforth let hysterics be blown to the winds, and let nerves be discarded from the female vocabulary, since a lady so young and fair can stand this shock without hartshorn or fainting!"

"I am happy," answered Cecilia, "to find your spirits so good; yet my own, I must confess, are not raised by seeing you in this strange situation."

"My spirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never so good as at this moment. Strange as seems my situation, it is all that I wish; I have found out, at last, the true secret of happiness! that secret which so

long I pursued in vain, but which always eluded my grasp, till the instant of despair arrived; when, slackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more! thou airy bubble! thou fleeting shadow! I will live no longer in thy sight, since thy beams dazzle without warming me! Mankind seems only composed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy delusions may be presented to me no more!"

This romantic flight, which startled even Cecilia, though acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott the utmost surprise; his appearance, and the account they had just heard of him, having by no means prepared them for such sentiments or such language.

"Is then this great secret of happiness," said Cecilia, "nothing, at last, but total seclusion from the world?"

"No, madam," answered he, "it is labour with independence."

Cecilia now wished much to ask some explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and hurt to keep him standing, though he leant upon a stick; she told him, therefore, she would at present detain him no longer, but endeavour again to see him before she quitted her friends.

Mr. Arnott then interfered, and desired his sister would entreat Miss Beverley to invite whom she pleased to his house.

Cecilia thanked him, and instantly asked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with visits and society! I will not so soon break through a system with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquillity depends upon adhering to it. The worthlessness of mankind has disgusted me with the world, and my resolution in quitting it shall be immoveable as its baseness."

"I must not venture, then," said Cecilia, "to enquire ——"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he with quickness, "what you please: there is nothing I will not answer to you,—to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body.—What can I wish to conceal, where I have nothing to gain

or to lose? When first, indeed, I saw you, I involuntarily shrunk; a weak shame for a moment seized me, I felt fallen and debased, and I wished to avoid you; but a little recollection brought me back to my senses. And where, cried I, is the disgrace of exercising for my subsistence the strength with which I am endued? and why should I blush to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature first prescribed to man?"

"Well, then," said Cecilia, more and more interested to hear him, "if you will not visit us, will you at least permit us to return with you to some place where you can be seated?"

"I will with pleasure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be seated yourselves; but for me, I have ceased to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

"Will you then, sir," said Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much surprise and disappoint him?"

"Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be surprised. I would have quitted *his* house, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me shelter!"

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear it," said Cecilia; "I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

"Ill-usage," answered he, "is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly something pitiful in a complaint; and though oppression in a general sense provokes the wrath of mankind, the investigation of its minuter circumstances excites nothing but derision. Those who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but those who receive it, by the world at large will be despised. Conscious of this, I disdained making any appeal; myself the only sufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, shaking off the base trammels of interest and subjection, I quitted the house in silent indignation, not choosing to remonstrate, where I desired not to be reconciled."

"And was there no mode of life," said Cecilia, "to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

"I weighed every thing maturely," answered he, "before I made my determination, and I found it so much the most eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleasure have presented me to some other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted against leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill-will to disgrace, and pursuing hope in defiance of common sense; no; when I quitted Lord Vannelt, I resolved to give up patronage for ever.

"I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and disgusting; the army, too, but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence, than my body with action; general dissipation had then its turn, but the expense to which it led was ruinous, and self-reproach baffled pleasure while I pursued it; I have even—yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,—for why now disguise it?—"

He stopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice presently proceeded.

"Trade, also, has had its share in my experiments: for that, in truth, I was originally destined,—but my education had ill suited me to such a destination, and the trader's first maxim I reversed, in lavishing when I ought to have accumulated.

"What, then, remained for me? To run over again the same irksome round I had not patience, and to attempt anything new I was unqualified: money I had none; my friends I could bear to burden no longer; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irresolution,—a simple accident at the end of it happily settled me; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thousand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all; when a gentleman met me on horseback, from whom, at my Lord Vannelt's I had received particular civilities; I looked another way not to be seen by him, and the change in my dress since I left his lordship's made me easily pass unnoticed. He had rode on, however, but a few yards, before, by some accident or mismanagement, he had a fall from his horse. Forgetting

all my caution, I flew instantly to his assistance; he was bruised, but not otherwise hurt; I helped him up, and he leant upon my arm; in my haste of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked surprised at my appearance; he was speaking to me, however, with kindness, when seeing some gentlemen of his acquaintance galloping up to him, he hastily disengaged himself from me, and instantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he sedulously looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking further notice of me. For a moment I was almost tempted to trouble him to come back; but a little recollection told me how ill he deserved my resentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthless community.

"Here finished my deliberation; the disgust to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed; I saw it was only made for the great and the rich;—poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it? I determined to quit it for ever, and to end every disappointment, by crushing every hope.

"I wrote to Lord Vannelt to send my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would soon let her hear more. I then paid off my lodgings, and 'shaking the dust from my feet,' bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, strolled on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

"My first thought was simply to seek retirement, and to depend for my future repose upon nothing but a total seclusion from society: but my slow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection soon showed me the error of this notion.

"Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by solitude; but will misery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more assiduously than ever; for what is there to oppose them, where neither business occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the past has left nothing but resentment, and the future opens only to a dismal, uninteresting void? No stranger to life, I knew human nature could not exist on such terms; still less a stranger to books, I respected the voice of wisdom and

experience in the first of moralists, and most enlightened of men,[1] and reading the letter of Cowley, I saw the vanity and absurdity of *panting after solitude.*[2]

"I sought not, therefore, a cell; but, since I purposed to live for myself, I determined for myself also to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my scorn as servility of dependence; I resolved, therefore, to strike out something new, and no more to retire, as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

"The result of all you now see. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all society, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do.* I am constantly, not capriciously employed, and the exercise which benefits my health, imperceptibly raises my spirits in despite of adversity. I am removed from all temptation, I have scarce even the power to do wrong; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time: —I have found out, I repeat, the true secret of happiness, labour with independence."

He stopt; and Cecilia, who had listened to this narrative with a mixture of compassion, admiration and censure, was too much struck with its singularity to be readily able to answer it. Her curiosity to hear him had sprung wholly from her desire to assist him, and she had expected from his story to gather some hint upon which her services might be offered. But none had occurred; he professed himself fully satisfied with his situation; and though reason and probability contradicted the profession, she could not venture to dispute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with many apologies for the trouble she had given him, and added, "I must not express my concern for misfortunes which you seem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonstrate at the step you have taken, since you have been led to it by choice, not necessity: but yet, you must pardon me if I cannot help hoping I shall some time see you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the rest of the world."

[1] Dr. Johnson. (*Author's note.*)

[2] Life of Cowley, p. 34. (*Author's note.*)

"No, never, never! I am sick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken against mental fatigue, will secure me from repentance, or any desire of change; for it is not the active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your sister, sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions?"

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would sacrifice whatever they possess to enable me to play once more the game so often lost; but I will not abuse their affection, nor suffer them again to be slaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own delusive expectations. I have sent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much the affliction of their disappointment, and, for awhile shall conceal from them my situation, which they would fancy was disgraceful, and grieve at as cruel."

"And is it *not* cruel?" said Cecilia, "is labour indeed so sweet? and can you seriously derive happiness from what all others consider as misery?"

"Not sweet," answered he, "in itself; but sweet, most sweet and salutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my disappointments from the past. Mental fatigue is overpowered by personal; I toil till I require rest, and that rest which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to sound, heavy, necessary sleep. I awake the next morning to the same thought-exiling business, work again till my powers are exhausted, and am relieved again at night by the same health-recruiting insensibility."

"And if this," cried Cecilia, "is the life of happiness, why have we so many complaints of the sufferings of the poor, and why so eternally do we hear of their hardships and distress?"

"They have known no other life. They are strangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered with profusion adulation for their

abilities, yet, even when starving, been offered nothing else!—had they seen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themselves forgotten as soon as out of sight, and perceived themselves avoided when no longer buffoons!—Oh, had they known and felt provocations such as these, how gladly would their resentful spirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they respect that noble and manly labour, which at once disentangles them from such subjugating snares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contrast of vice, virtue unloved may be lovely; without the experience of misery, happiness is simply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you so content," cried Cecilia, "with your present situation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your past sufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my present situation! I glory in showing to the world, I glory still more in showing to myself, that those whom I cannot but despise I will not scruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will scorn to be obliged."

"But will you pardon me," said Cecilia, "should I ask again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one else worthy a trial?"

"Because it was less my Lord Vannelt, madam, than my own situation, that disgusted me: for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally esteemed to flatter myself better usage would await me in merely changing my abode, while my station was the same. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me; but I was offended the more that he should think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been at once mortifying and vain; for delicacy, like taste, can only partially be taught, and will always be superficial and erring where it is not innate. Those wrongs, which though too trifling to resent, are too humiliating to be borne, speech can convey no idea of; the soul must feel, or the understanding can never comprehend them."

"But surely," said Cecilia, "though people of refinement

are rare, they yet exist; why, then, remove yourself from the possibility of meeting with them?"

"Must I run about the nation," cried he, "proclaiming my distress, and describing my temper? telling the world that though dependent I demand respect as well as assistance; and publishing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely? Who will listen to such an account? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his service? who will hear my mortifications, but to say I deserve them? what has the world to do with my feelings and peculiarities? I know it too well to think calamity will soften it; I need no new lessons to instruct me that to conquer affliction is more wise than to relate it."

"Unfortunate as you have been," said Cecilia, "I cannot wonder at your asperity; but yet, it is surely no more than justice to acknowledge, that hard-heartedness to distress is by no means the fault of the present times: on the contrary, it is scarce sooner made known, than everyone is ready to contribute to its relief."

"And how contribute?" cried he, "by a paltry donation of money? Yes, the man whose only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them; but he who asks kindness and protection, whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his struggling soul, if superior to his fate, to brook the ostentation of patronage, and the insolence of condescension? Yes, yes, the world will save the poor beggar who is starving; but the fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his support, may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help!"

Cecilia now saw that the wound his sensibility had received was too painful for argument, and too recent immediately to be healed. She forbore, therefore, to detain him any longer, but expressing her best wishes, without venturing to hint at her services, she arose, and they all took their leave;—Belfield hastening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they passed, they saw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerness of a man who pursues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and sadness, in the

concern which she felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wished much to devise some means for drawing him from a life of such hardship and obscurity; but what to a man thus "jealous in honour," thus scrupulous in delicacy, could she propose, without more risk of offence than probability of obliging? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he stood in need of assistance, but it had shown her no less how fastidious he would be in receiving it.[1]

Nor was she wholly without fear that an earnest solicitude to serve him, his youth, talents, and striking manners considered, might occasion even in himself a misconstruction of her motives, such as she already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The present, therefore, all circumstances weighed, seemed no season for her liberality, which she yet resolved to exert the first moment it was un-opposed by propriety.

CHAPTER II.

A CONTEST.

THE rest of the day was passed in discussing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's interest in it was all sunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miss Beverley.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquillity of a retirement so judiciously chosen, and I lament the necessity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though so captivating, is so painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to suffer; and happy only are those whose sufferings have neither by folly

[1] "Next to Albany, my father is fondest of Belfield. The tradesman *manqué*, he says, is new, and may be not uninstructive, and he is much pleased with his various struggles, and the *agrémens* of his talents, and the spirit, yet failure, of his various flights and experiments."—*Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, May, 1782, *Diary*, p. 142, vol. ii.

been sought, nor by guilt been merited, but arising merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been resisted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous steadiness, which corresponds with my expectations, while it excites my respect. All further conflict I had hoped to have saved you; and to the triumph of your goodness I had trusted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has disappointed me, and our work is still unfinished.

He avers that he is solemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he silences both expostulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his dismission; and notwithstanding my reluctance to impose upon you this task, I cannot silence or quiet him without making the request.

For a purpose such as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable decision? You will feel, I am sure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earnestly my desire to spare you the sight of his affliction; yet such is my confidence in your prudence, that since I find him bent upon seeing you, I am not without hope, that from witnessing the greatness of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This proposal you will take into consideration, and if you are able, upon such terms, to again meet my son, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleness of your nature will make the effort too severe for you, scruple not to decline it, for Mortimer, when he knows your pleasure, will submit to it as he ought.

Adieu, most amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be sure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever must you retain, the esteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "when shall I be at rest? when cease to be persecuted by new conflicts! Oh, why must I so often, so cruelly, though so reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wish to accept and to please!"

But yet, though repining at this hard necessity, she hesitated not a moment in complying with Mrs. Delvile's request, and immediately sent an answer that she would meet her the next morning at Mrs. Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott for the abruptness of her visit, and the suddenness of her departure. Mr. Arnott heard her in silent dejection; and Mrs. Harrel used all the persuasion in her power to prevail with her to stay, her presence being some relief to her solitude: but finding it ineffectual, she earnestly pressed her to hasten her entrance into her own house, that their absence might be shortened and their meeting more sprightly.

Cecilia passed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day; she found how much was expected from her by Mrs. Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own strength. Delvile's firmness in insisting the refusal should come directly from herself, surprised, gratified, and perplexed her in turn; she had imagined, that from the moment of the discovery, he would implicitly have submitted to the award of a parent at once so reverenced and so beloved, and how he had summoned courage to contend with her she could not conjecture: yet that courage and that contention astonished not more than they soothed her, since, from her knowledge of his filial tenderness, she considered them as the most indubitable proofs she had yet received of the fervor and constancy of his regard for her. But would he, when she had ratified the decision of his mother, forbear all further struggle, and for ever yield up all pretensions to her? this was the point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling subject of her thoughts and meditation.

To be steady, however, herself, be his conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earnestly she wished the meeting over, for she dreaded to see the sorrow of Delvile, and she dreaded still more the susceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr. Arnott was waiting in the hall when she came down stairs, and so much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaise without being able to speak to her, and hardly heard

her thanks and compliments, but by recollection after she was gone.

She arrived at Mrs. Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the same state she had left her. She communicated to her the purpose of her return, and begged she would keep her grand-daughters up stairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and hasty breakfast, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was passed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmost efforts for courage, could hardly stand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs. Delvile, advancing before her son, and endeavouring so to stand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few instants her emotion would be less visible, said, in the most soothing accents, "What honour Miss Beverley does us by permitting this visit! I should have been sorry to have left Suffolk without the satisfaction of again seeing you; and my son, sensible of the high respect he owes you, was most unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia curtsied; but depressed by the cruel task which awaited her, had no power to speak; and Mrs. Delvile, finding she still trembled, made her sit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Meanwhile Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, because wholly unrestrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and resentment, said, "In this presence, at least, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanswered, my visits refused, though inexorably you have flown me—"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miss Beverley for no other purpose than to give and to receive a mutual release of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never assented. I come not to release, but to

claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I protest it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now past for the sacrifice which you demand, since scarce are you more my mother, than I consider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntless declaration, now almost lost her fear in her surprise; while Mrs. Delvile, with an air calm, though displeased, answered, "This is not a point to be at present discussed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only consented to this interview as a mark of your respect for Miss Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off this unfortunate connexion."

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be silent, now gathered fortitude to say, "Whatever tie or obligation may be supposed to depend upon me, I have already relinquished, and I am now ready to declare—"

"That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, "is that what you would say?—Oh, how have I offended you? how have I merited displeasure that can draw upon me such a sentence?—Answer, speak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?"

"Nothing, sir," said Cecilia, confounded at this language in the presence of his mother, "you have done nothing, but yet—"

"Yet what?—have you conceived to me an aversion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy succeeded to your esteem;—tell, tell me without disguise, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia sighed, and turned away her head: and Mrs. Delvile indignantly exclaimed, "What madness and absurdity! I scarce know you under the influence of such irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miss Beverley in the only speech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppress her, and irritate me, by words of more passion than reason? Go on, charming girl, finish what so wisely, so judiciously you were beginning, and then you shall be released from this turbulent persecution."

"No, madam, she must not go on!" cried Delvile, "if she does not utterly abhor me, I will not *suffer* her to go on;—Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquisite delicacy is betraying not only my happiness, but your own.

Once more, therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then if, deliberately and unbiassed, you renounce me, I will never more distress you by resisting your decree."

Cecilia, abashed and changing colour, was silent, and he proceeded.

"All that has passed between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, constancy and affection, the consent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of settlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in suffering me to lead you to the altar,—all these particulars are already known to so many, that the least reflection must convince you they will soon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the scruples which lead you to refuse, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay enjoin you to accept me?—You hesitate, at least,—O Miss Beverley! I see in that hesitation—"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried she, hastily, and checking her rising irresolution; "there is nothing for you to see, but that every way I now turn I have rendered myself miserable!"

"Mortimer," said Mrs. Delvile, seized with terror as she penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, "you have now spoken to Miss Beverley; and unwilling as I am to obtrude upon her our difference of sentiment, it is necessary, since she has heard you, that I, also, should claim her attention."

"First let her speak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, "first let her answer what she has already deigned to listen to."

"No, first let her hear!" cried Mrs. Delvile, "for so only can she judge what answer will reflect upon her most honour."

Then, solemnly turning to Cecilia, she continued: "You see here, Miss Beverley, a young man who passionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration, friends, family, and connections, the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his house, his own former views, and all his primitive sense of duty, both public and private!—A passion built on such a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him

would be a union which would blot his name from the injured stock whence he sprung, than indelicate for you, who upon such terms ought to despise him."

"Heavens, madam," exclaimed Delvile, "what a speech!"

"O never," cried Cecilia, rising, "may I hear such another! Indeed, madam, there is no occasion to probe me so deeply, for I would not now enter into your family, for all that the whole world could offer me!"

"At length then, madam," cried Delvile, turning reproachfully to his mother, "are you satisfied? is your purpose now answered? and is the dagger you have transfixed in my heart sunk deep enough to appease you?"

"O, could I draw it out," cried Mrs. Delvile, "and leave upon it no stain of ignominy, with what joy should my own bosom receive it, to heal the wound I have most compulsatorily inflicted!—Were this excellent young creature portionless, I would not hesitate in giving my consent; every claim of interest would be overbalanced by her virtues, and I would not grieve to see you poor, where so conscious you were happy; but here to concede, would annihilate every hope with which hitherto I have looked up to my son."

"Let us now, then, madam," said Cecilia, "break up this conference. I have spoken, I have heard, the decree is past, and therefore,—"

"You are indeed an angel!" cried Mrs. Delvile, rising and embracing her; "and never can I reproach my son with what has past, when I consider for what an object the sacrifice was planned. *You* cannot be unhappy, you have purchased peace by the exercise of virtue, and the close of every day will bring to you a reward, in the sweets of a self-approving mind.—But we will part, since you think it right; I do wrong to occasion any delay."

"No, we will *not* part!" cried Delvile, with encreasing vehemence; "if you force me, madam, from her, you will drive me to distraction! What is there in this world that can offer me a recompence? And what can pride even to the proudest afford as an equivalent? Her perfections you acknowledge, her greatness of mind is like your own; she has generously given me her heart.—Oh, sacred and fascinating charge! Shall I, after such a deposit, consent to an eternal separation? Repeal, repeal your sentence,

my Cecilia! let us live to ourselves and our consciences, and leave the vain prejudices of the world to those who can be paid by them for the loss of all besides!"

"Is this conflict, then," said Mrs. Delvile, "to last for ever? Oh, end it, Mortimer, finish it, and make me happy! she is just, and will forgive you; she is noble-minded, and will honour you. Fly, then, at this critical moment, for in flight alone is your safety; and then will your father see the son of his hopes, and then shall the fond blessings of your idolizing mother soothe all your affliction, and soften all your regret!"

"Oh, madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel supplication!"

"Nay, more than supplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet disputed, and misery, tenfold misery, will follow their disobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I speak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or destined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, struck by these words, turned suddenly from them both, and in gloomy despondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs. Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to pursue the blow: taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes sparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," she cried, pointing to her son, "see if I am deceived! can he bear even the suggestion of future contrition? Think you when it falls upon him, he will support it better? No; he will sink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and stedfast in principle, what would your chance be of happiness with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondness what it might?"

"Oh, madam," cried the greatly shocked Cecilia, "let *him*, then, see me no more!—take, take him all to yourself! forgive, console him! I will not have the misery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he so much reverences!"

"Exalted creature!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "tenderness such as this would confer honour upon a monarch." Then, calling out exultingly to her son, "See," she added, "how greatly a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity

and a just sense of duty! Follow then, at least, the example you ought to have led, and deserve my esteem and love, or be content to forego them."

"And can I only deserve them," said Delvile, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "by a compliance to which not merely my happiness, but my reason must be sacrificed? What honour do I injure that is not factitious? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves superior to all other considerations."

"Mistaken notions!" said Mrs. Delvile; "and how long do you flatter yourself this independent happiness would endure? How long could you live contented by mere self-gratification, in defiance of the censure of mankind, the renunciation of your family, and the curses of your father?"

"The curses of my father?" repeated he, starting and shuddering, "O no, he could never be so barbarous!"

"He could," said she, steadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the prospect of his disclaiming you, think but what you will feel when first forbid to appear before either of us! and think of your remorse for involving Miss Beverley in such disgrace!"

"O speak not such words!" cried he, with agonizing earnestness. "To disgrace her,—to be banished by you,—present not, I conjure you, such scenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued she; "nor have I said to you all; blinded as you now are by passion, your nobler feelings are only obscured, not extirpated; think, then, how they will all rise in revenge of your insulted dignity, when your name becomes a stranger to your ears, and you are first saluted by one so meanly adopted!—"

"Hold, hold, madam," interrupted he, "this is more than I can bear!"

"Heavens!" still continued she, disregarding his entreaty, "what in the universe can pay you for that first moment of indignity! Think of it well ere you proceed, and anticipate your sensations, lest the shock should wholly overcome you. How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of Mr. *Beverley!*"

Delvile, stung to the soul, attempted not any answer, but walked about the room in the utmost disorder of mind. Cecilia would have retired, but feared irritating him to some extravagance; and Mrs. Delvile, looking after him, added "For myself, I would still see, for I should pity your wife,—but NEVER would I behold my son when sunk into an object of compassion!"

"It shall not be!" cried he, in a transport of rage; "cease, cease to distract me!—be content, madam,—you have conquered!"

"Then you are my son!" cried she, rapturously embracing him; "now I know again my Mortimer! now I see the fair promise of his upright youth, and the flattering completion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded, desired nothing so much as to congratulate them on their reconciliation; but having only said, "Let *me*, too,—" her voice failed her, she stopt short, and hoping she had been unheard, would have glided out of the room.

But Delvile, penetrated and tortured, yet delighted at this sensibility, broke from his mother, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Beverley, if *you* are not happy—"

"I am! I am!" cried she, with quickness; "let me pass,—and think no more of me."

"That voice,—those looks,—" cried he, still holding her, "they speak not serenity!—Oh, if I have injured your peace,—if that heart, which, pure as angels, deserves to be as sacred from sorrow, through my means, or for my sake, suffers any diminution of tranquillity—"

"None, none!" interrupted she, with precipitation.

"I know well," cried he, "your greatness of soul; and if this dreadful sacrifice gives lasting torture only to myself,—

if of *your* returning happiness I could be assured,—I would struggle to bear it."

"You *may* be assured of it," cried she, with reviving dignity, "I have no right to expect escaping all calamity, but while I share the common lot, I will submit to it without repining."

"Heaven then bless, and hovering angels watch you!" cried he, and letting go her hand, he ran hastily out of the room.

"Oh, Virtue, how bright is thy triumph!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, flying up to Cecilia, and folding her in her arms; "Noble, incomparable young creature! I knew not that so much worth was compatible with human frailty!"

But the heroism of Cecilia, in losing its object, lost its force; she sighed, she could not speak; tears gushed into her eyes, and kissing Mrs. Delvile's hand with a look that showed her inability to converse with her, she hastened, though scarce able to support herself, away, with intention to shut herself up in her own apartment: and Mrs. Delvile, who perceived that her utmost fortitude was exhausted, opposed not her going, and wisely forbore to encrease her emotion, by following her even with her blessings.

But when she came into the hall, she started, and could proceed no farther; for there she beheld Delvile, who in too great agony to be seen, had stopt to recover some composure before he quitted the house.

At the first sound of an opening door, he was hastily escaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and discerning her situation, he more hastily turned back, saying, "Is it possible?—To *me* were you coming?"

She shook her head, and made a motion with her hand to say no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale!—Oh, Miss Beverley! is this your happiness?"

"I am very well,—" cried she, not knowing what she answered, "I am quite well,—pray go,—I am very—" her words died away inarticulated.

"Oh, what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, "it pierces my very soul!"

Mrs. Delvile now came to the parlour door, and looked aghast at the situation in which she saw them: Cecilia

again moved on, and reached the stairs, but tottered, and was obliged to cling to the banisters.

"O suffer me to support you," cried he; "you are not able to stand—whither is it you would go?"

"Anywhere,—I don't know—" answered she, in faltering accents, "but if you would leave me, I should be well."

And, turning from him, she walked again towards the parlour, finding by her shaking frame, the impossibility of getting unaided up the stairs.

"Give me your hand, my love," said Mrs. Delvile, cruelly alarmed by this return; and the moment they re-entered the parlour, she said impatiently to her son, "Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, sinking into a chair, hid her face against Mrs. Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and blushing at the weakness she had betrayed, she raised her head, and, with an assumed serenity, said "I am better,—much better,——I was rather sick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuse me, I will go to my own room."

She then arose, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again seating herself, she forced a faint smile, and said, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it shakes all my resolution!——loveliest and most beloved Cecilia! forgive my rash declaration, which I here retract and forswear, and which no false pride, no worthless vanity shall again surprise from me!——raise, then, your eyes—"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with an air of haughty displeasure, "if you cannot be rational, at least be silent, Miss Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earnestness, now restored some strength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs. Delvile the passions with which she was agitated, and instantly obeyed her by rising; but her son, who inherited a portion of her own spirit, rushed between them both and the door, and exclaimed "Stay, madam, stay! I cannot let you go: I see your intention, I see your dreadful purpose; you will work upon the feelings of Miss Beverley, you will extort from her a promise to see me no more!"

"Oppose not my passing!" cried Mrs. Delvile, whose voice, face, and manner, spoke the encreasing disturbance of her soul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I must now take some better method for the security of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delvile decisive; and casting off in desperation all timidity and restraint, he suddenly sprang forward, and snatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up!—nor now, madam, nor ever!—I protest it most solemnly! I affirm it by my best hopes! I swear it by all that I hold sacred!"

Grief and horror, next to frenzy, at a disappointment thus unexpected, and thus peremptory, rose in the face of Mrs. Delvile, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to disengage herself from Delvile, who, shocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the sudden departure of his mother, hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands, and neck all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it you have done!—where are you wounded?—what direful curse have you denounced against your son?"[1]

Not able to speak, she angrily shook her head, and indignantly made a motion with her hand, that commanded him from her sight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the presence of mind to ring the bell. A servant came immediately; and Delvile, starting up from his

[1] "'Ah, ma'am,' said Mrs. Delany, 'how hard your Grace was upon Mrs. Delvile: so elegant, so sensible, so judicious, so charming a woman.' 'O, I hate her,' cried the Duchess," (of Portland) "'resisting that sweet Cecilia; coaxing her, too, all the time, with such hypocritical flattery.'

"'I shall never forget,' said Mrs. Delany, 'your Grace's earnestness when we came to the part where Mrs. Delvile bursts a blood-vessel. Down dropped the book, and just with the same energy as if your Grace had heard some real and important news, you called out, 'I'm glad of it, with all my heart!'"—*Diary of Madame D'Arblay*, p. 252, vol. ii.

mother, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon or physician he could find.

The alarm now brought the rest of the servants into the room, and Mrs. Delvile suffered herself to be raised from the ground, and seated in a chair; she was still silent, but showed a disgust to any assistance from her son, that made him deliver her into the hands of the servants, while, in speechless agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own sorrow, and no longer sensible of personal weakness, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, she yet considered herself as the ultimate cause of this dreadful scene, and feared to risk the effect of the smallest additional emotion.

The servant returned with a surgeon in a few minutes: Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would say, glided hastily out of the room; and Delvile, in still greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to speak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in hasty steps up and down it, without courage to enquire what was passing.

At length the surgeon came out: Delvile flew to him, and stopt him, but could ask no question. His countenance, however, rendered words unnecessary; the surgeon understood him, and said, "The lady will do very well; she has burst a blood vessel, but I think it will be of no consequence. She must be kept quiet and easy, and upon no account suffered to talk, or to use any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himself into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was less than he had at first apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, "Heaven be praised, my mother has not voluntarily cursed me!"

"O now, then," cried Cecilia, "once more make her bless you! the violence of her agitation has already almost destroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this struggle of contending passions;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her spirits, by acquiescing wholly in her will, and being to her again the son she thinks she has lost!"

"Alas!" said he, in a tone of the deepest dejection; "I have been preparing myself for that purpose, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

"Let us both go to her instantly," said Cecilia; "the least delay may be fatal."

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs. Delvile, who, faint and weak, was seated upon an arm-chair, and resting her head upon the shoulder of a maid-servant, said, "Lean, dearest madam, upon *me*, and speak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and desired her and the other servants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his sight, its wonted fire, darted upon him a glance of such displeasure, that, shuddering with the apprehension of inflaming again those passions which threatened her destruction, he hastily sunk on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with less abhorrence, for I come but to resign myself to your will."

"Mine, also," cried Cecilia, "that will shall be; you need not speak it, we know it, and here solemnly we promise that we will separate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," said Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your son will never more offend you."

Mrs. Delvile, much surprised, and strongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compassion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the bosom of Cecilia, who with her other arm she pressed towards her, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, sir!" said Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have said all that is necessary; leave Mrs. Delvile now, and she will be more composed."

Delvile instantly obeyed, and then his mother, whose mouth still continued to fill with blood, though it gushed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to consent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another house might be dangerous, she complied also, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that she would take entire possession of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had past to Mrs. Charlton, but was told by one of the servants, that Mr. Delvile begged first to speak with her in the next room.

She hesitated for a moment whether to grant this request; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of staying all night, she went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice as she opened the door; "I am now going post to Dr. Lyster, whom I shall entreat to come hither instantly; but I am fearful of again disturbing my mother, and must therefore rely upon you to acquaint her what is become of me."

"Most certainly; I have begged her to remain here to-night, and I hope I shall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr. Lyster's arrival; after which she will, doubtless, be guided either in staying longer, or removing elsewhere, by his advice."

"You are all goodness," said he, with a deep sigh; "and how I shall support—but I mean not to return hither, at least not to this house,—unless, indeed, Dr. Lyster's account should be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindness, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health, —your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her —by anxiety,—by pity for her son—"

He stopt, and seemed gasping for breath; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of speech that showed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his struggle with himself to be gone: "The promise you have made in both our names to my mother, I shall hold myself bound to observe. I see, indeed, that her reason or her life would fall the sacrifice of further opposition: of myself, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to say nothing—"

"Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint smile; "lose not, therefore, an instant, but hasten to this good Dr. Lyster."

"I will;" answered he, going to the door; but there, stopping and turning round, "one thing I should yet," he added, "wish to say: I have been impetuous, violent, unreasonable,—with shame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreasonable: I have persecuted, where I ought in silence to have submitted; I have reproached,

where I ought in candour to have approved; and in the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion! but never can I forget, and never without fresh wonder remember, the sweetness with which you have borne with me, even when most I offended you.—For this impatience, this violence, this inconsistency, I now most sincerely beg your pardon; and if, before I go, you could so far condescend as to pronounce my forgiveness, with a lighter heart, I think, I should quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveness," said Cecilia, "you have never offended me; I always knew—always was sure—always imputed—" she stopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by the apparent distress, he with difficulty restrained himself from falling at her feet: but after a moment's pause and recollection, he said, "I understand the generous indulgence you have shown me, an indulgence I shall ever revere, and ever grieve to have abused. I ask you not to remember me,—far, far, happier do I wish you than such a remembrance could make you; but I will pain the humanity of your disposition no longer. You will tell my mother—but no matter!—Heaven preserve you, my angelic Cecilia!—Miss Beverley, I mean,—Heaven guide, protect, and bless you! And should I see you no more, should this be the last sad moment——"

He paused, but presently recovering himself, added, "May I hear, at least, of your tranquillity, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repress the anguish I feel here!"

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the house.

Cecilia for a while remained almost stupified with sorrow; she forgot Mrs. Delvile, she forgot Mrs. Charlton, she forgot her own design of apologizing to one, or assisting the other; she continued in the posture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almost without sensibility.[1]

[1] "The conflict scene for Cecilia, between the mother and son, to which you so warmly object, is the very scene for which I wrote the whole book, and so entirely does my plan hang upon it, that I must abide by its reception in the world, or put the whole behind the fire. . . . The character of Mrs. Delvile struck you in so favourable a

CHAPTER III.

A MESSAGE.

FROM this lethargy of sadness Cecilia was soon, however, awakened by the return of the surgeon, who had brought with him a physician to consult upon Mrs. Delvile's situation. Terror for the mother once more drove the son from her thoughts, and she waited with the most apprehensive impatience to hear the result of the consultation. The physician declined giving any positive opinion, but, having written a prescription, only repeated the injunction of the surgeon, that she should be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be suffered to talk.

Cecilia, though shocked and frightened at the occasion, was yet by no means sorry at an order which thus precluded all conversation; unfitted for it by her own misery, she was glad to be relieved from all necessity of imposing upon herself the irksome task of finding subjects for discourse to which she was wholly indifferent, while obliged with sedulity to avoid those by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs. Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmost concern, but charged her grand-daughters to assist her young friend in doing the honours of her house to Mrs. Delvile, while she ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom she administered all the consolation her friendly zeal could suggest.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too just a way of thinking to indulge in selfish grief, where occasion called her to action for the benefit of others: scarce a moment, therefore, now did she allow to sorrow and herself, but assiduously bestowed the whole of her time upon her two sick

light, that you sunk, as I remember I privately noticed to myself, when you mentioned her, all the passages to her disadvantage previous to this conflict, else it would have appeared to you less inconsistent, for the way is paved for it in several places. . . . Your anger at Mrs. Delvile's violence and obduracy is only what I meant to excite; your thinking it unnatural is all that disturbs me."—*Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, March 15, 1782.—*Diary*, p. 127, vol. ii.

friends, dividing her attention according to their own desire or convenience, without consulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, she had none; she loved Mrs. Charlton, she revered Mrs. Delvile; the warmest wish with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleasure from either.

Two days passed thus, during which the constancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief she was capable of receiving. Mrs. Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderness, but seemed equally desirous with herself to make use of the prohibition to speech as an excuse for uninterrupted silence. She enquired not even after her son, though the eagerness of her look towards the door, whenever it was opened, showed either a hope, or an apprehension that he might enter. Cecilia wished to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded trusting her voice with his name; and their silence, after awhile, seemed so much by mutual consent, that she had soon as little courage as she had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr. Lyster gave her much satisfaction, for upon him rested her hopes of Mrs. Delvile's re-establishment. He sent for her down stairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, desired her to announce him, as the smallest emotion might do mischief.

She returned up stairs, and after a short preparation, said, "Your favourite Dr. Lyster, madam, is come, and I shall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr. Lyster!" cried she, "who sent for him?"

"I believe—I fancy—Mr. Delvile fetched him."

"My son;—is he here, then?"

"No,—he went, the moment he left you, for Dr. Lyster, —and Dr. Lyster is come by himself."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed!—he writes not—he comes not—dearest madam be satisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more!"

"Exemplary young man!" cried she, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loss!—unhappy Mortimer!—ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!"

She sighed, and said no more; but this short conversa-

tion, the only one which had passed between them since her illness, agitated her so much, that Dr. Lyster, who now came up stairs, found her in a state of trembling and weakness that both alarmed and surprised him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and sent, by Dr. Lyster's desire, for the physician and surgeon who had already attended.

After they had been some time with their patient, they retired to a consultation, and when it was over, Dr. Lyster waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and assured her he had no apprehension of danger for Mrs. Delvile; "Though, for another week," he added, "I would have her continue *your* patient, as she is not yet fit to be removed. But pray mind that she is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own son. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, so I'll just speak again to his mother, and be gone."

Cecilia was well pleased by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delvile for his mother, and the steadiness of his forbearance for himself. When Dr. Lyster came down stairs again, "I shall stay," he said, "'till to-morrow, but I hope she will be able in another week to get to Bristol. In the meantime I shall leave her, I see, with an excellent nurse. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourself; I am not quite pleased with your looks, though it is but an old fashioned speech to tell you so.—What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing;" said she, a little embarrassed, "but had you not better have some tea?"

"Why, yes, I think I had;—but what shall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia understood the hint, but coloured, and made no answer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, so if you will give me some tea here, I shall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia instantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," said he, "remember the sin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I shall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough

to excuse me, I shall desire he will try whether he could be more of a stoic with you himself."

"I think I must *un*order the tea," said she, with what gaiety she could assume, "if I am to be responsible for any mischief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you sha'nt be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to send and ask him to come to us?"

"Why I believe—I think—" said she, stammering, "it's very likely he may be engaged."

"Well, well, I don't mean to propose any violent incongruity. You must excuse my blundering; I understand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a science too intricate to be learned without more study than we plodding men of business can well spare time for. However, when I have done *writing* prescriptions, I will set about *reading* them, provided you will be my instructress."

Cecilia, though ashamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was compelled to submit to it, as either to send for Delvile, or explain her objections, was equally impossible. The Miss Charltons therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Just as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr. Lyster; "See here," cried he, when he had read it, "what a fine thing it is to be a *young* man! Why now, Mr. Mortimer understands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourselves; for he only writes a note even to ask how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

To Dr. Lyster.

TELL me, my dear sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneasy at your long stay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I should have followed you in person.

M. D.

"So you see," continued the doctor, "I need not do penance for engaging myself to *you*, when this young gentleman can find such good entertainment for himself."

Cecilia, who well knew the honourable motive of Delvile's engagement, with difficulty forbore speaking in his vindica-

tion. Dr. Lyster immediately began an answer, but before he had finished it, called out, "Now, as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no less than assist me to punish this gay spark, for playing the *macçaroni*, when he ought to visit his sick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delvile, and much confused for herself, looked abashed, but knew not what to answer.

"My scheme," continued the doctor, "is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for supper; but that as to me, I am better disposed of, for you insist upon keeping me to yourself. Come, what says *etiquette?* may I treat myself with this puff?"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleased, "if you will favour us with your company, Miss Charltons and myself will think the *puffing* should rather be ours than yours."

"That then," said the doctor, "will not answer my purpose; for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I punish him? So, suppose I tell him I shall not only sup with three young ladies, but be invited to a tête-à-tête with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the doctor finished his note, and sent it away; and then, turning gaily to Cecilia, "Come," he said, "why don't you give me this invitation? surely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little disposed for pleasantry, would gladly now have dropt the subject; but Dr. Lyster, turning to the Miss Charltons, said, "Young ladies, I call you both to witness if this is not very bad usage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falsehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of such frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and so make her keep her word whether she will or no."

The Miss Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all suspected he meant seriously to speak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to say.

"Mrs. Delvile," cried he, continuing the same air of easy good humour, "though I allowed her not to speak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me that

you had behaved to her like an angel. Why so she ought, cried I; what else was she sent for here to look so like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of course: and to prove that I really think what I say, I am now going to make a trial of you, that, if you are anything less, will induce you to order some of your men to drive me into the street. The truth is, I have had a little commission given me, which in the first place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the second, as far as I can judge, appears to be absolutely superfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneasy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himself. He then dropt the levity with which he had begun the discourse, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expressive of his unwillingness to distress her, and his firm persuasion of her uncommon worthiness, he acquainted her that he was no stranger to her situation with respect to the Delvile family.

"Good God!" cried she, blushing and much amazed; "and who—"

"I knew it," said he, "from the moment I attended Mr. Mortimer in his illness at Delvile Castle. He could not conceal from me that the seat of his disorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cause, when I saw who was his father's guest, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed to me, and upon my advising a journey, he understood me properly. His openness to counsel, and the manly firmness with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But last week, when I was at the Castle, where I have for some time attended Mr. Delvile, who has had a severe fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of spirits that made me apprehend it would be thrown into his stomach. I desired Mrs. Delvile to use her influence to calm him; but she was herself in still greater emotion, and acquainting me she was obliged to leave him, desired I would spend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almost lived at the Castle during her absence, and, in the course of our many conversations, he has acknowledged to me the uneasiness under which he laboured, from the intelligence concerning his son which he had just received."

Cecilia wished here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was still with the father when Mr. Mortimer arrived post at my house to fetch me hither. I was sent for home; he informed me of his errand without disguise, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original secret whence all the evil arose. I told him my distress in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely shocked himself when acquainted with his situation. We agreed that it would be vain to conceal from him the indisposition of Mrs. Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thousand other accidents, might in some unfortunate way make known to him. He commissioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might consent to my journey, and at the same time to quiet his own mind by assuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He stopt, and looked to see how Cecilia bore these words.

"It *is* all at an end, sir;" said she, with firmness; "but I have not yet heard your commission; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly satisfied it is unnecessary;" he answered, "since the young man can but submit and you can but give him up."

"But still, if there is a message, it is fit I should hear it."

"If you choose it, so it is. I told Mr. Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his son's assurances. He was relieved, but not satisfied; he would not see him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme severity,—— and to *you* he bids me say—"

"From *him*, then, is my message?" cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much disappointed.

"Yes," said he, understanding her immediately, "for the son, after giving me his first account, had the wisdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," said she, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But, what, sir, said Mr. Delvile?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* must see his son never more."

"It was indeed unnecessary," cried she, colouring with resentment, "to send me such a message. I meant not to see him again, he meant not to desire it. I return him, how-

ever, no answer, and I will make him no promise; to Mrs. Delvile alone I hold myself bound; to him, send what messages he may, I shall always hold myself free. But believe me, Dr. Lyster, if with his name, his son had inherited his character, his desire of our separation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am sorry, my good young lady," said he, "to have given you this disturbance; yet I admire your spirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little disappointment you may have suffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delvile is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wish to attach; but every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have least reason to repine in missing him, for scarcely is there another man you may not choose or reject at your pleasure."

Little as was the consolation Cecilia could draw from this speech, she was sensible it became not her situation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the conversation, she proposed calling in the Miss Charltons.

"No, no," said he, "I must step up again to Mrs. Delvile, and then be-gone. To-morrow morning I shall but call to see how she is, and leave some directions, and set off. Mr. Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back; but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Bristol. Meantime, I purpose to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whose prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be strange indeed," said Cecilia, "should a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long since he was young himself, and the softer affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his son as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not some few such men, there would hardly be a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I must own, of his humour myself, but I think it rather peculiarly stranger, than peculiarly worse than most other people's; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was just as fond of *his* name, as if, like Mr. Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia strongly felt the truth of this observation, but not

choosing to discuss it, made not any answer, and Dr. Lyster, after a few good-natured apologies, both for his friends, the Delviles, and himself, went up stairs.

"What continual disturbance," cried she, when left alone, "keeps me thus forever from rest! no sooner is one wound closed, but another is opened; mortification constantly succeeds distress, and when my heart is spared my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquillity may ever be allowed me! Had the lowest of women won the affections of Mr Delvile, could his father with less delicacy or less decency have acquainted her with his inflexible disapprobation? To send with so little ceremony a message so contemptuous and so peremptory!—but perhaps it is better; for had he, too, like Mrs. Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might still more keenly have felt the perverseness of my destiny."

CHAPTER IV.

A PARTING.

THE next morning Dr. Lyster called early, having visited Mrs. Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whose care she was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving first to speak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her spirits. "Don't suppose," said he, "that because I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why should they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worse than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happiness which they ought to give you. People reason and refine themselves into a thousand miseries, by choosing to settle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," answered Cecilia, "and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what I can

towards studying your scheme of philosophy, and it is always one step to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

"You are a sensible and charming girl," said Dr. Lyster, "and Mr. Delvile, should he find a daughter-in-law descended in a right line from Egbert, first king of all England, won't be so well off as if he had satisfied himself with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleased his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we shall find, upon sifting, it is for no other reason but because his humour happens to clash with our own."

"That, indeed," said Cecilia, smiling, "is a truth incontrovertable! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to ask one question?—Can you tell me from whom, how, or when, the intelligence which has caused all this disturbance———"

She hesitated, but, comprehending her readily, he answered "How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is so generally known, that nobody I meet with seems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel shock to Cecilia, and Dr. Lyster, perceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. "That the affair is somewhat spread," said he, "is now not to be helped, and therefore little worth thinking of; everybody will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be ashamed to be successor to either, whenever the course of things leads Mr. Mortimer and yourself to make another election. He wisely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a short time given to vexation, need interrupt your happiness? You have the whole world before you, with youth, fortune, talents, beauty and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly shook hands with her, and went into his chaise.

Cecilia, though not slow in remarking the ease and philosophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities,

and moralize upon the misconduct of others, had still the candour and good sense to see that there was reason in what he urged, and to resolve upon making the best use in her power of the hints for consolation she might draw from his discourse.

During the following week, she devoted herself almost, wholly to Mrs. Delvile, sharing with the maid, whom she had brought with her from the Castle, the fatigue of nursing her, and leaving to the Miss Charltons the chief care of their grand-mother. For Mrs. Delvile appeared every hour more sensible of her attention, and more desirous of her presence, and though neither of them spoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendship which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr. Lyster was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himself with Mrs. Delvile to Bristol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the first opportunity aside, "how are you? Have you studied my scheme of philosophy, as you promised me?"

"O yes," said she, "and made, I flatter myself, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am sure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my soul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage and spirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he submits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes glistened at this speech; "Yes," said she; "he long since said 'tis suspense, 'tis hope, that make the misery of life,—for there the passions have all power, and reason has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither resources to plan, nor castle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philosophy, and flatter ourselves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why, you have considered this matter very deeply," said he; "but I must not have you give way to these serious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel spite against happiness; I would have you, therefore, keep, as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourself, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of hap-

piness in this most whimsical world, seems nothing more nor less than this.—Let those who have leisure, find employment, and those who have business find leisure."

He then told her that Mr. Delvile senior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleasure of seeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his son, of whom he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the universe.

"Think of him, however, my dear young lady," he continued, "no more, for the matter I see is desperate: you must pardon my being a little officious, when I confess to you I could not help proposing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myself in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my scheme was really a very good one, only when people are prejudiced, all reasoning is thrown away upon them. I proposed sinking *both* your names, since they are so at variance with one another, and so adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr. Delvile angrily declared, that though such a scheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a peer of twenty years, his own noble ancestors should never, by his consent, forfeit a name which so many centuries had rendered honourable. His son Mortimer, he added, must inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather see him a beggar, than lose his dearest hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would descend, both name and title, from generation to generation unsullied and uninterrupted."[1]

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "that such a proposal was made, and I earnestly entreat that none of any sort may be repeated."

"Well, well," said he, "I would not for the world do any mischief, but who would not have supposed such a proposal would have done good?"

"Mr. Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at —— for

[1] "Lady de Ferrars drew a chair next mine, and began talking of 'Cecilia.' 'We have plagued my lord,' said she, 'to death about it, because he always says that old Delvile was in the right not to give up a good family name; but I was never so glad as when I found the old gentleman's own name was that of my lord De Ferrars; for he, you know,

he would not, he said, come again to this place, upon such terms as he was here last week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now ready, and Mrs. Delvile was prepared to depart. Cecilia approached to take leave of her, but Dr. Lyster following, said, "No talking! no thanking! no compliments of any sort! I shall carry off my patient without permitting one civil speech, and for all the rudeness I make her guilty of, I am willing to be responsible."

Cecilia would then have retreated, but Mrs. Delvile, holding out both her hands, said "To every thing else, Dr. Lyster, I am content to submit; but were I to die while uttering the words, I cannot leave this inestimable creature without first saying how much I love her, how I honour, and how I thank her! without entreating her to be careful of her health, and conjuring her to complete the greatness of her conduct, by not suffering her spirits to sink from the exertion of her virtue. And now, my love, God bless you!"

She then embraced her, and went on; Cecilia, at a motion of Dr. Lyster's, forbearing to follow her.

"And thus," cried she, when they were gone, "thus ends all my connection with this family! which it seems as if I was only to have known for the purpose of affording a new proof of the insufficiency of situation to constitute happiness. Who looks not upon mine as the perfection of human feli-

is a Compton;* so I told him I was sure it was himself, and he owned that if he had been a Delvile, he should have done the same with a Beverley.' . . . . . Mrs. Thrale has since met Lord De Ferrars, and talked over all the book to him; and he told her that he thought it's great merit was the reasonableness of the Delvilian distress with respect to changing their name!

"I felt, however, a little ashamed when Lady De Ferrars told me her lord's name, which he has, with his title in right of his mother; but as I had tied it to a family celebrated for its antiquity, I saw they were none of them displeased."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, pp. 180-1, vol. ii.

* George Ferrars, (afterwards second Marquis Townsend,) succeeded in 1770, to the baronies of De Ferrars of Chartley, Bouchier, Lovaine, Basset, and Compton, which had been held by his mother, Charlotte, only daughter of James Compton, Earl of Northampton.

city ?—And so, perhaps, it is, for it may be that felicity and humanity are never permitted to come nearer."[1]

And thus, in philosophic sadness, by reasoning upon the universality of misery, she restrained, at least, all violence of sorrow, though her spirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it some comfort that a little lightened her sadness; Mrs. Charlton, almost wholly recovered, was able to go down stairs, and Cecilia had at least the satisfaction of seeing a happy conclusion to an illness of which, with the utmost concern and regret, she considered herself as the cause. She attended her with the most unremitting assiduity, and being really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herself that, by continual effort, the appearance in a short time would become reality.

Mrs. Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up stairs: and while she was with her, was informed that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon scenes in which she had been engaged since she last saw him, had almost wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to attribute the discontinuance of his visits to the offence she had given him, in refusing to follow his advice by relinquishing her London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying transactions which had

[1] "Neither my daddy" (Crisp), "my father, nor Mr. Bewley, are here judges to oppose to Lord de Ferrars, who, being a man of rank, and having a cherished name himself, is more fit to decide upon this question than wit, understanding, judgment, or general knowledge can make any others who have not the power to so well feel the temptation of family pride in exciting such obstacles to reason and happiness. I never meant to vindicate old Delvile, whom I detested and made detestable; but I always asserted that, his character and situation considered, he did nothing that such a man would hesitate in doing.

. . . . . I always told my dear daddy" (Crisp) "that his reasoning against the Delvile prejudice, however unanswerable for truth, by no means disproved the existence of such prejudice, as all those very high-born and long genealogists agree. Mrs Thrale herself says that her own mother would have acted precisely as Mrs. Delvile acted, and Mrs. Thrale's father was descended from Adam of Saltzburg."—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, pp. 180-1, vol. ii.

passed since their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into disgraces he had nearly foretold, she heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the most painful confusion.

Far different were the feelings of Mr. Monckton; he read in her countenance the dejection of disappointment, which impressed upon his heart the vivacity of hope: her evident shame was to him secret triumph, her ill-concealed sorrow revived all his expectations.

She hastily began a conversation by mentioning her debt to him, and apologising for not paying it the moment she was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and assured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the present situation of her affairs; but, unable to endure a disquisition which could only be productive of censure and mortification, she hastily stopt it, exclaiming, "Ask me not, I entreat you, sir, any detail of what has passed,——the event has brought me sufferings that may well make blame dispensed with;—I acknowledge all your wisdom, I am sensible of my own error, but the affair is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connexion I was forming is broken off for-ever!"

Little now was Mr. Monckton's effort in repressing his further curiosity, and he started other subjects with readiness, gaiety and address. He mentioned Mrs. Charlton, for whom he had not the smallest regard; he talked to her of Mrs. Harrel, whose very existence was indifferent to him; and he spoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if assured of meeting no more. His powers of conversation were enlivened by his hopes; and his exhilarated spirits made all subjects seem happy to him. A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remotest hopes; the object of his eager pursuit seemed still within his reach, and the rival into whose power he had so lately almost beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution such as this, raised expectations more sanguine than ever; and in quitting the house, he exultingly considered himself released from every obstacle to his views—till, just as he arrived home, he recollected his wife!

CHAPTER V.

A TALE.

A WEEK passed, during which Cecilia, however sad, spent her time as usual with the family, denying to herself all voluntary indulgence of grief, and forbearing to seek consolation from solitude, or relief from tears. She never named Delvile, she begged Mrs. Charlton never to mention him; she called to her aid the account she had received from Dr. Lyster of his firmness, and endeavoured, by an emulous ambition, to fortify her mind from the weakness of depression and regret.

This week, a week of struggle with all her feelings, was just elasped, when she received by the post the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Bristol, Oct. 21.

MY sweet young friend will not, I hope, be sorry to hear of my safe arrival at this place: to me every account of her health and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I shall most covet to receive. Yet I mean not to ask for it in return; to chance I will trust for information, and I only write now to say I shall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you, and what I think of you is beyond all power of expression. Do not, then, wish me ill, ill as I have seemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almost broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practise upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia; you shall not be tormented with a useless correspondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give rise to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the restoration of your happiness, to which nothing can so greatly contribute as that wise, that uniform command, so feminine, yet so dignified, you maintain over

your passions; which often I have admired, though never so feelingly as at this conscious moment! when my own health is the sacrifice of emotions most fatally unrestrained.

Send to me no answer, even if you have the sweetness to wish it; every new proof of the generosity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly,—alas! you have only known us for sorrow!—forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia! though ever, as you have nobly deserved, must you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

The attempted philosophy, and laboured resignation of Cecilia, this letter destroyed: the struggle was over, the apathy was at an end, and she burst into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long sought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, sad monitors of the weakness of reason opposed to the anguish of sorrow!

A letter at once so caressing, yet so absolute, forced its way to her heart, in spite of the fortitude she had flattered herself was its guard. In giving up Delvile she was satisfied of the propriety of seeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they must remain strangers to the existence of each other—there seemed in this a hardship, a rigour, that was insupportable.

"Oh, what," cried she, "is human nature! in its best state how imperfect! that a woman such as this, so noble in character, so elevated in sentiment, with heroism to sacrifice to her sense of duty the happiness of a son, whom with joy she would die to serve, can herself be thus governed by prejudice, thus enslaved, thus subdued by opinion!" Yet never, even when miserable, unjust or irrational; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears streamed not from resentment, but affliction. The situation of Mrs. Delvile, however different, she considered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore, with sadness, but not bitterness, her farewell, and received not with disdain, but with gratitude, her sympathy. Yet, though her indignation was not irritated, her sufferings were doubled, by a farewell so kind, yet so despotic; a sympathy so affectionate, yet so hopeless.

In this first indulgence of grief which she had granted to

her disappointment, she was soon interrupted by a summons down stairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be seen, she begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again

Her maid brought for answer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and desired to see her now, unless she was employed in some matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour; and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr. Albany.

"How little, sir," she cried, "did I expect this pleasure."

"This pleasure," repeated he, "do you call it?—what strange abuse of words! what causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? Is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me—the whole world could not invest you with the means!"

"Well, sir," said Cecilia, who had little spirit to defend herself, "I will not vindicate the expression, but of this I will unfeignedly assure you, I am at least as glad to see you just now, as I should be to see anybody."

"Your eyes," cried he, "are red, your voice is inarticulate;—young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet; that world yet untried, and its falsehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate misery? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation! That cover once removed, can never be replaced; those woes, those boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceases to beat, will their ebullition cease to torture you!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, shuddering, "how cruel, yet how true!"

"Why went you," cried he, "to the cauldron? it came not to you. Misery seeks not man, but man misery. He walks out in the sun, but stops not for a cloud; confident, he pursues his way, till the storm which, gathering he might have avoided, bursts over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity; he calls, but it is then too late! he runs, but it is thunder which follows him. Such is the presumption of man, such at once is the arrogance and shallowness of his nature! And thou, simple and blind! hast thou,

too, followed whither fancy has led thee, unheeding that thy career was too vehement for tranquillity, nor missing that lovely companion of youth's early innocence, till, adventurous and unthinking, thou hast lost her for ever!"

In the present weak state of Ceeilia's spirits, this attack was too much for her; and the tears she had just, and with difficulty restrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as she answered, "It is but too true,—I have lost her for ever!"

"Poor thing," said he, while the rigour of his countenance was softened into the gentlest commiseration, "so young!—looking, too, so innocent!—'tis hard!—And is nothing left thee? no small remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat thy yet not wholly extinguished credulity?"

Cecilia wept without answering.

"Let me not," said he, "waste my compassion upon nothing; compassion is with me no effusion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deservest it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?"

"Factitious," repeated she, "Good heaven!"

"Answer me, then, these questions, in which I shall comprise the only calamities for which sorrow has no control, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you lost by death the friend of your bosom?"

"No!"

"Is your fortune dissipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the distressed at an end?"

"No; the power and the will are, I hope, equally undiminished."

"O, then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of some vice, and hangs remorse thus heavy on your conscience?"

"No, no; thank heaven, to that misery at least, I am a stranger!"

His countenance now again resumed its severity, and, in the sternest manner, "Whence then," he said, "these tears? and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of sorrow?—strange wantonness of indolence and luxury! perverse repining of ungrateful plenitude!—oh, hadst thou known what *I* have suffered!—"

"Could I lessen what you have suffered," said Cecilia, "I should sincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed must be your affliction, if mine, in its comparison, deserves to be styled caprice!"

"Caprice!" repeated he, "'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!—Thou hast not in licentiousness wasted thy inheritance! thou hast not by remorse barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave seized the beloved of thy soul!"

"Neither," said Cecilia, "I hope, are the evils you have yourself sustained so irremediable?"

"Yes, I have borne them all!—*have* borne? I bear them still; I shall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer."

"Good God!" cried Cecilia, shrinking, "what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedness!"

"Yet thou, too, canst complain," cried he, "though happy in life's only blessing, Innocence! thou, too, canst murmur, though stranger to death's only terror, Sin! O, yet, if thy sorrow is unpolluted with guilt, be regardless of all else, and rejoice in thy destiny!"

"But who," cried she, deeply sighing, "shall teach me such a lesson of joy, when all within rises to oppose it?"

"I," cried he, "will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own sad story. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raise thy head in thankful triumph."

"O, no! triumph comes not so lightly!—yet if you will venture to trust me with some account of yourself, I shall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

"I will," he answered, "whatever I may suffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied sorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou shalt probe them with fresh shame."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, with quickness, "I will not hear you, if the relation will be so painful."

"Upon *me* this humanity is lost," said he, "since punishment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayest know thy own felicity, lest, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou shouldst lose it, unconscious of its value. Listen then to me, and learn what misery is! Guilt is alone the basis of lasting unhappiness; guilt is the basis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for ever!"

Cecilia would have again declined hearing him, but he refused to be spared: and as her curiosity had long been ex-

cited to know something of his history, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, she was glad to have it satisfied, and gave him the utmost attention.

"I will not speak to you of my family," said he, "historical accuracy would little answer to either of us. I am a native of the West Indies, and I was early sent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the University, I saw, I adored, and I pursued the fairest flower that ever put forth its sweet buds, the softest heart that ever was broken by ill usage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; she was untaught and unpretending, the child of simplicity! But fifteen summers had she bloomed, and her heart was an easy conquest; yet, once made mine, it resisted all allurement to infidelity. My fellow students attacked her; she was assaulted by all the arts of seduction; flattery, bribery, supplication, all were employed, yet all failed; she was wholly my own; and with sincerity so attractive, I determined to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

"The sudden death of my father called me hastily to Jamaica; I feared leaving this treasure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as soon as I had settled my affairs, and I left to a bosom friend the inspection of her conduct in my absence.

"To leave her was madness,—to trust in man was madness.—O, hateful race! how has the world been abhorrent to me since that time! I have loathed the light of the sun, I have shrunk from the commerce of my fellow-creatures; the voice of man I have detested, his sight I have abominated!—but oh, more than all should I be abominated myself!

"When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with sudden power, I forgot this fair blossom, I revelled in licentiousness and vice, and left it exposed and forlorn. Riot succeeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, first gave me time to think. Then was she revenged, for then first remorse was my portion: her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondness, and bitterest contrition. The moment I recovered, I returned to England; I flew to claim her,—but she was lost! no one knew whither she was gone; the wretch I had trusted pretended to know least of all; yet, after a furious search, I

traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himself!

"When she saw me, she screamed and would have flown; I stopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though sullied, were not extinguished, for she instantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

"Did I recompense this ingenuousness? this unexampled, this beautiful sacrifice to intuitive integrity! Yes, with my curses!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled her in language the most opprobrious, I insulted her even for her confession! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, she implored my forgiveness and compassion, she wept with the bitterness of despair,—and yet I spurned her from me!—Spurned?—let me not hide my shame! I barbarously struck her!——nor single was the blow!—it was doubled, it was reiterated!—Oh, wretch, unyielding and unpitying!—where shall hereafter be clemency for thee!—So fair a form! so young a culprit! so infamously seduced! so humbly penitent!

"In this miserable condition, helpless and deplorable, mangled by these savage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I left her, in search of the villain who had destroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had absconded. Repenting my fury, I hastened to her again; the fierceness of my cruelty shamed me when I grew calmer, the softness of her sorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to soothe her,—but again she was gone! terrified with expectation of insult, she hid herself from all my enquiries. I wandered in search of her two long years to no purpose, regardless of my affairs, and of all things but that pursuit. ——At length, I thought I saw her—in London, alone, and walking in the streets at midnight.——I fearfully followed her,—and followed her into a house of infamy!

"The wretches by whom she was surrounded were noisy and drinking, they heeded me little,—but she saw and knew me at once!—She did not speak, nor did I,—but in two moments she fainted, and fell.

"Yet did I not help her; the people took their own measures to recover her, and when she was again able to stand, would have removed her to another apartment.

"I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the strength of desperation, I turned to the unhappy sinner, who to chance only seemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this scene of vice and horror let me yet rescue you! you look still unfit for such society, trust yourself, therefore, to me. I seized her hand, I drew, I almost dragged her away. She trembled, she could scarce totter, but neither consented nor refused, neither shed a tear, nor spoke a word, and her countenance presented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

"I took her to a house in the country, each of us silent the whole way. I gave her an apartment, and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could suggest. I staid myself in the same house, but, distracted with remorse for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her sight.

"In a few days her maid assured me the life she led must destroy her; that she would taste nothing but bread and water, never spoke, and never slept.

"Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and resentment gave way to pity and fondness, and I besought her to take comfort. I spoke, however, to a statue, she replied not, nor seemed to hear me. I then humbled myself to her as in the days of her innocence and first power, supplicating her notice, entreating even her commiseration! all was to no purpose; she neither received nor repulsed me, and was alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

"Whole hours did I spend at her feet, vowing never to arise till she spoke to me,—all, all, in vain! she seemed deaf, mute, insensible; her face unmoved, a settled despair fixed in her eyes,—those eyes that had never looked at me but with dove-like softness and compliance!—She sat constantly in one chair, she never changed her dress, no persuasions could prevail with her to lie down, and at meals she just swallowed so much dry bread as might save her from dying for want of food.

"What was the distraction of my soul, to find her bent upon this course to her last hour!—quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

"When she felt herself expiring, she acknowledged she

had made a vow, upon entering the house, to live speechless and motionless, as a penance for her offences!

"I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!"

Cecilia shuddered at this hint, yet was not surprised by it; Mr. Gosport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightiness, wildness, florid language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to suspect his reason had been impaired.

"The scene to which my memory first leads me back," he continued, "is visiting her grave; solemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal severity. To her poor remains did I pledge myself, that the day should never pass in which I would receive nourishment, nor the night come in which I would take rest, till I had done, or zealously attempted to do, some service to a fellow-creature.

"For this purpose have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every house where I can gain admittance; I admonish all who will hear me; I shame even those who will not. I seek the distressed wherever they are hid; I follow the prosperous to beg a mite to serve them. I look for the Dissipated in public, where, amidst their licentiousness, I check them; I pursue the Unhappy in private, where I counsel and endeavour to assist them. My own power is small; my relations, during my sufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I scruple to solicit, and by zeal I supply ability.

"O, life of hardship and penance! laborious, toilsome, and restless! But I have merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forsworn.

"One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myself,—'tis Music! which has power to delight me even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out of myself, I forget through it every calamity, even the bitterest anguish.

"Now, then, that thou hast heard me, tell me, hast *thou* cause of sorrow?"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a picture of misery to make *my* lot seem all happiness!"

"Art thou thus open to conviction?" cried he, mildly; "and dost thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one?"

"No, I would rather seek it; I feel myself wretched, however inadequate may be the cause; I wish to be more resigned, and, if you can instruct me how, I shall thankfully attend to you."

"Oh, yet uncorrupted creature!" cried he, "with joy will I be thy monitor,—joy long untasted! Many have I wished to serve; all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honest to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to listen to me! too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found pure enough not to fear inspection, and good enough to wish to be better. Yet words alone will not content me; I must also have deeds. Nor will your purse, however readily opened, suffice; you must give to me also your time and your thoughts; for money sent by others, to others only will afford relief; to lighten your own cares, you must distribute it yourself."

"You shall find me," said she, "a docile pupil, and most glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this county; yet not in search of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenious young man! what a lesson to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the sight of that green fallen plant! not sapless by age, nor withered by disease, but destroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

"And where, sir, is he now?

"Labouring wilfully in the field, with those who labour compulsatorily; such are we all by nature, discontented, perverse, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear so, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but his employment was inoffensive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praise. I came to see if you deserved it; I have seen, and am satisfied."

"You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin these operations you propose? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleasure, which nothing else, I believe, could just now have given me."

"We will work," cried he, "together, till not a woe shall remain upon your mind. The blessings of the fatherless, the prayers of little children, shall heal all your wounds with balm of sweetest fragrance. When sad, they shall cheer, when complaining, they shall soothe you. We will go to their roofless houses, and see them repaired; we will exclude from their dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will rescue them from hunger. The cries of distress shall be changed to notes of joy: your heart shall be enraptured, mine, too, shall revive —oh, whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elysium! and while I idly speak, some fainting object dies for want of succour! Farewell; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedness, and come to you to-morrow to render them the abodes of happiness."

He then went away.

This singular visit was for Cecilia most fortunately timed: it almost surprised her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty and imaginative as were his language and his counsels, their morality was striking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her state with that of at least half her species, she began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had presented to her of good works was consonant to her character and inclinations: and the active charity in which he proposed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different subjects from those which had depressed them. Any scheme of worldly happiness would have sickened and disgusted her; but her mind was just in the situation to be impressed with elevated piety, and to adopt any design in which virtue humoured melancholy.[1]

[1] "I have no time, except to tell you a comical tale which Mrs. Thrale ran to acquaint me with. She had been calling upon Mr. Scrase, an [redacted] and dear friend, who is confined with the gout; and while she was

CHAPTER VI.

A SHOCK.

CECILIA passed the rest of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; she determined to wander with her romantic new ally whithersoever he would lead her, and to spare neither fortune, time, nor trouble, in seeking and relieving the distressed. Not all her attempted philosophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refusing indulgence to grief, she had only locked it up in her heart, where, eternally struggling for vent, she was almost overpowered by restraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itself; the hope of doing good, the pleasure of easing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the service of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination,—that source of promissory enjoyment, which, though often obstructed, is never, in youth, exhausted.

She would not give Mrs. Charlton the unnecessary pain of hearing the letter with which she had been so much affected, but she told her of the visit of Albany, and pleased her with the account of their scheme.

At night, with less sadness than usual, she retired to rest. In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored

inquiring about him of his nurse and housekeeper, the woman said, 'Ah, madam, how happy are you to have Minerva in the house with you!' 'Oh,' cried Mrs. Thrale, 'you mean my dear Miss Burney, that wrote 'Cecilia.' So you have read it; and what part did you like?' 'Oh, madam, I liked it all better than anything I ever saw in my life; but most of all I liked that good old gentleman, Mr. Albany, that goes about telling people their duty, without so much as thinking of their fine clothes. When Mrs. Thrale told us this at dinner, Dr. Johnson said, 'I am all of the old housekeeper's mind; Mr. Albany I have always stood up for; he is one of my first favourites. Very fine indeed are the things he says.' My dear Dr. Johnson! what condescension is this! He fully, also, enters into all my meaning in the high-flown language of Albany, from his partial insanity and unappeasable remorse."—*Diary of Madame D'Arblay*, p. 183, vol. ii.

to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world. From a cloud in which she was supported by angels, Cecilia beheld these wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illusion, she was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs. Charlton was dying!

She started up, and, undressed, was running to her apartment,—when the maid, calling to stop her, confessed she was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who slept in the room with her, going early to her bedside to enquire how she did, found her cold and motionless, and could only conclude that a paralytic stroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been somewhat recruited by one night of refreshing slumbers and flattering dreams, for the shock she now received promised her not soon another.

She lost in Mrs. Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy she had considered as a mother, and by whom she had been cherished with tenderness almost unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her disposition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earliest circumstances she could trace were kindnesses received from her. Since she had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part she had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had she unbosomed her secret cares. Though little assisted by her counsel, she was always certain of her sympathy; and while her own superior judgment directed her conduct, she had the relief of communicating her schemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whose greatest wish and chief pleasure was the enjoyment of her conversation.

If left to herself, in the present period of her life, Mrs. Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her fastidious, and she would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs. Charlton had no pretensions: but those who live in the country have

little power of selection; confined to a small circle, they must be content with what it offers; and however they may idolize extraordinary merit when they meet with it, they must not regard it as essential to friendship, for in their circumscribed rotation, whatever may be their discontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the situation to which Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Harrel owed the friendship of Cecilia. Greatly their superior in understanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But she became known to both before discrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind discerned their deficiencies, they had already an interest in her affections, which made her see them with lenity: and though sometimes, perhaps, conscious she should not have chosen them from many, she adhered to them with sincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs. Harrel, however, too weak for similar sentiments, forgot her when out of sight, and by the time they met again, was insensible to everything but show and dissipation. Cecilia, shocked and surprised, first grieved from disappointed affection, and then lost that affection in angry contempt. But her fondness for Mrs. Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindness which had excited it had never known allay. She had loved her first from childish gratitude; but that love, strengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourse, was now as sincere and affectionate as if it had originated from sympathetic admiration. Her loss, therefore, was felt with the utmost severity, and neither seeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, she considered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterness.

When the first surprise of this cruel stroke was somewhat lessened, she sent an express to Mr. Monckton with the news, and entreated to see him immediately. He came without delay, and she begged his counsel what step she ought herself to take in consequence of this event. Her own house was still unprepared for her; she had of late neglected to hasten the workmen, and almost forgotten her intention of entering it. It was necessary, however, to change her abode immediately; she was no longer in the

house of Mrs. Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heiresses, each of whom she disliked, and upon neither of whom she had any claim.

Mr. Monckton then, with the quickness of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a scheme, upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was that she would instantly remove to his house, and remain there till settled to her satisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of surprising Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to discuss it, lest new objections should arise, he quitted her, to fetch himself from her ladyship an invitation he meant to insist upon her sending.

Cecilia, though heartily disliking this plan, knew not at present what better to adopt, and thought anything preferable to going again to Mrs. Harrel, since that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Monckton soon returned with a message of his own fabrication; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleased, took care to guard inviolate the independence of speech, sullenly persevering in refusing to say anything, or perversely saying only what he least wished to hear.

Cecilia then took a hasty leave of the Miss Charltons, who, little affected by what they had lost, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and, with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the last time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for ever quitting her hospitable house, sorrowfully set out for the Grove.

CHAPTER VII.

A COGITATION.

LADY MARGARET MONCKTON received Cecilia with the most gloomy coldness; she apologized for the liberty she had taken in making use of her ladyship's house, but meeting no return of civility, she withdrew to

the room which had been prepared for her, and resolved as much as possible to keep out of her sight.

It now became necessary, without further delay, to settle her plan of life, and fix her place of residence. The forbidding looks of Lady Margaret made her hasten her resolves, which otherwise would for a while have given way to grief for her recent misfortune.

She sent for the surveyor who had the superintendence of her estates, to enquire how soon her own house would be fit for her reception; and heard there was yet work for near two months.

This answer made her very uncomfortable. To continue two months under the roof with Lady Margaret was a penance she could not enjoin herself, nor was she at all sure Lady Margaret would submit to it any better: she determined, therefore, to release herself from the conscious burthen of being an unwelcome visitor, by boarding with some creditable family at Bury, and devoting the two months in which she was to be kept from her house, to a general arrangement of her affairs, and a final settling with her guardians.

For these purposes it would be necessary she should go to London: but with whom, or in what manner, she could not decide. She desired, therefore, another conference with Mr. Monckton, who met her in the parlour.

She then communicated to him her schemes; and begged his counsel in her perplexities.

He was delighted at the application, and extremely well pleased with her design of boarding at Bury, well knowing he could then watch and visit her at his pleasure, and have far more comfort in her society than even in his own house, where all the vigilance with which he observed her was short of that with which he was himself observed by Lady Margaret. He endeavoured, however, to dissuade her from going to town, but her eagerness to pay the large sum she owed him, was now too great to be conquered. Of age, her fortune wholly in her power, and all attendance upon Mrs. Charlton at an end, she had no longer any excuse for having a debt in the world, and would suffer no persuasion to make her begin her career in life with a negligence in settling her accounts which she had so often censured in

others. To go to London, therefore, she was fixed, and all that she desired was his advice concerning the journey.

He then told her, that in order to settle with her guardians, she must write to them in form, to demand an account of the sums that had been expended during her minority, and announce her intention for the future to take the management of her fortune into her own hands.

She immediately followed his directions, and consented to remain at the Grove till their answers arrived.

Being now, therefore, unavoidably fixed for some time at the house, she thought it proper and decent to attempt softening Lady Margaret in her favour. She exerted all her powers to please and to oblige her; but the exertion was necessarily vain, not only from the disposition, but the situation of her ladyship, since every effort made for the conciliatory purpose, rendered her doubly amiable in the eyes of her husband, and consequently to herself more odious than ever. Her jealousy, already but too well founded, received every hour the poisonous nourishment of fresh conviction, which so much soured and exasperated a temper naturally harsh, that her malignity and ill-humour grew daily more acrimonious. Nor would she have contented herself with displaying this irascibility by general moroseness, had not the same suspicious watchfulness which discovered to her the passion of her husband, served equally to make manifest the indifference and innocence of Cecilia; to reproach her, therefore, she had not any pretence, though her knowledge how much she had to dread her, passed current in her mind for sufficient reason to hate her. The Angry and the Violent use little discrimination;—whom they like, they enquire not if they approve; but whoever, no matter how unwittingly, stands in their way, they scruple not to ill use, and conclude they may laudably detest.

Cecilia, though much disgusted, gave not over her attempt, which she considered but as her due while she continued in her house. Her general character, also, for peevishness and haughty ill-breeding, skilfully, from time to time, displayed, and artfully repined at by Mr. Monckton, still kept her from suspecting any peculiar animosity to herself, and made her impute all that passed to the mere

ncour of ill-humour. She confined herself, however, as much as possible, to her own apartment, where her sorrow for Mrs. Charlton almost hourly increased, by the comparison she was forced upon making of her house with the Grove.

That worthy old lady left her grand-daughters her coheiresses and sole executrixes. She bequeathed from them nothing considerable, though she left some donations for the poor, and several of her friends were remembered by small legacies. Among them Cecilia had her picture, and favourite trinkets, with a paragraph in her will, that as there was no one she so much loved, had her fortune been ss splendid, she should have shared with her grandughters whatever she had to bestow.

Cecilia was much affected by this last and solemn remembrance. She more than ever coveted to be alone, that he might grieve undisturbed, and she lamented without ceasing the fatigue and the illness which, in so late a period, as it proved, of her life, she had herself been the means of occasioning to her.

Mr. Monckton had too much prudence to interrupt this desire of solitude, which indeed cost him little pain, as he nsidered her least in danger when alone. She received, about a week, answers from both her guardians. Mr. lvile's letter was closely to the purpose, without a word t of business, and couched in the haughtiest terms. As he had never, he said, acted, he had no accounts to send in: but as he was going to town in a few days, he would see her for a moment in the presence of Mr. Briggs, that a joint release might be signed, to prevent any future application to him.

Cecilia much lamented there was any necessity for her seeing him at all, and looked forward to the interview as the greatest mortification she could suffer.

Mr. Briggs, though still more concise, was far kinder in s language: but he advised her to defer her scheme of aking the money into her own hands, assuring her she ould be cheated, and had better leave it to him.

When she communicated these epistles to Mr. Monckton, e failed not to read, with an emphasis, by which his arrot ant meaning was still more arrogantly enforced, the letter

of Mr. Delvile aloud. Nor was he sparing in comments that might render it yet more offensive. Cecilia neither concurred in what he said, nor opposed it, but contented herself, when he was silent, with producing the other letter.

Mr. Monckton read not this with more favour. He openly attacked the character of Briggs, as covetous, rapacious, and overreaching, and warned her by no means to abide by his counsel, without first taking the opinion of some disinterested person. He then stated the various arts which might be practised upon her inexperience, enumerated the dangers to which her ignorance of business exposed her, and annotated upon the cheats, double dealings, and tricks of stock-jobbing, to which he assured her Mr. Briggs owed all he was worth, till, perplexed and confounded, she declared herself at a loss how to proceed, and earnestly regretted that she could not have his counsel upon the spot.

This was his aim: to draw the wish from her, drew all suspicion of selfish views from himself: and he told her that he considered her present situation as so critical, the future confusion or regularity of her money transactions seeming to depend upon it, that he would endeavour to arrange his affairs for meeting her in London.

Cecilia gave him many thanks for the kind intention, and determined to be totally guided by him in the disposal and direction of her fortune.

Meantime he had now another part to act; he saw that with Cecilia nothing more remained to be done, and that, harbouring not a doubt of his motives, she thought his design in her favour did her nothing but honour; but he had too much knowledge of the world to believe it would judge him in the same manner, and too much consciousness of duplicity to set its judgment at defiance. To parry, therefore, the conjectures which might follow his attending her, he had already prepared Lady Margaret to wish herself of the party: for however disagreeable to him was her presence and her company, he had no other means to be under the same roof with Cecilia.

Miss Bennet, the wretched tool of his various schemes, and the mean sycophant of his lady, had been employed by him to work upon her jealousy, by secretly informing her

of his intention to go to town, at the same time that Cecilia went thither to meet her guardians. She pretended to have learned this intelligence by accident, and to communicate it from respectful regard; and advised her to go to London herself at the same time, that she might see into his designs, and be some check upon his pleasure.

The increasing infirmities of Lady Margaret made this counsel by no means palatable: but Miss Bennet, following the artful instructions which she received, put in her way so strong a motive, by assuring her how little her company was wished, that in the madness of her spite she determined upon the journey. And little heeding how she tormented herself while she had any view of tormenting Mr. Monckton, she was led on by her false confidant to invite Cecilia to her town house.

Mr. Monckton, in whom, by long practice, artifice was almost nature, well knowing his wife's perverseness, affected to look much disconcerted at the proposal; while Cecilia, by no means thinking it necessary to extend her compliance to such a punishment, instantly made an apology, and declined the invitation.

Lady Margaret, little versed in civility, and unused to the arts of persuasion, could not, even for a favourite project, prevail upon herself to use entreaty, and therefore, thinking her scheme defeated, looked gloomily disappointed, and said nothing more.

Mr. Monckton saw with delight how much this difficulty inflamed her, though the moment he could speak alone with Cecilia he made it his care to remove it.

He represented to her that, however privately she might live, she was too young to be in London lodgings by herself, and gave a hint which she could not but understand, that in going or in staying with only servants, suspicions might soon be raised, that the plan and motive of her journey were different to those given out.

She knew that he meant to insinuate that it would be conjectured she designed to meet Delvile, and though colouring, vext and provoked at the suggestion, the idea was sufficient to frighten her into his plan.

In a few days, therefore, the matter was wholly arranged, Mr. Monckton, by his skill and address, leading every one

whither he pleased, while by the artful coolness of his manner, he appeared but to follow himself. He set out the day before, though earnestly wishing to accompany them, but having as yet in no single instance gone to town in the same carriage with Lady Margaret, he dared trust neither the neighbourhood nor the servants with so dangerous a subject for their comments.

Cecilia, compelled thus to travel with only her ladyship and Miss Bennet, had a journey the most disagreeable: and determined, if possible, to stay in London but two days. She had already fixed upon a house in which she could board at Bury when she returned; and there she meant quietly to reside till she could enter her own.

Lady Margaret herself, exhilarated by a notion of having outwitted her husband, was in unusual good spirits, and almost in good humour. The idea of thwarting his designs, and being in the way of his entertainment, gave to her a delight she had seldom received from anything; and the belief that this was effected by the superiority of her cunning, doubled her contentment, and raised it to exultation. She owed him, indeed, much provocation and uneasiness, and was happy in this opportunity of paying her arrears.

Meanwhile that consummate master in every species of hypocrisy indulged her in this notion, by the air of dissatisfaction with which he left the house. It was not that she meant by her presence to obviate any impropriety: early and long acquainted with the character of Cecilia, she well knew, that during her life the passion of her husband must be confined to his own breast: but conscious of his aversion to herself, which she resented with the bitterest ill-will, and knowing how little, at any time, he desired her company, she consoled herself for her inability to give pleasure by the power she possessed of giving pain, and bore with the fatigue of a journey disagreeable and inconvenient to her, with no other view than the hope of breaking into his plan of avoiding her, little imagining that the whole time she was forwarding his favourite pursuit, and only acting the part which he had appointed her to perform.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE.

LADY MARGARET'S town house was in Soho-square;[1] and scarcely had Cecilia entered it, before her desire to speed her departure, made her send a note to each of her guardians, acquainting them of her arrival, and begging, if possible, to see them the next day.

She had soon the two following answers:

To Miss CECILIA BEVERLEY.
These.

November 8, 1779.

Miss,

Received your's of the same date; can't come to-morrow. Will, Wednesday the 10th.

Am, &c.

JN°. BRIGGS.

Miss Cecilia Beverley.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Mr. Delvile has too many affairs of importance upon his hands, to make any appointment till he has deliberated how to arrange them. Mr. Delvile will acquaint Miss Beverley when it shall be in his power to see her.

St. James's-square, Nov. 8.

These characteristic letters, which at another time might have diverted Cecilia, now merely served to torment her. She was eager to quit town, she was more eager to have her meeting with Mr. Delvile over, who, oppressive to her even when he meant to be kind, she foresaw, now he was in wrath, would be imperious even to rudeness. Desirous, however, to make one interview suffice for both, and to settle whatever business might remain unfinished by letters,

[1] In 1779, Soho Square was still enough in fashion to be fit for the residence of Mr. Monckton and Lady Margaret. Indeed, in Cunningham's 'Handbook for London,' which was published in 1849, it is said to contain "some good houses, well-inhabited, till within the last thirty years."

she again wrote to Mr. Briggs, whom she had not spirits to encounter without absolute necessity, and informing him of Mr. Delvile's delay, begged he would not trouble himself to call till he heard from her again.

Two days passed without any message from them; they were spent chiefly alone, and very uncomfortably. Mr. Monckton being content to see little of her, while he knew she saw nothing of any body else. On the third morning, weary of her own thoughts, weary of Lady Margaret's ill-humoured looks, and still more weary of Miss Bennet's parasitical conversation, she determined, for a little relief to the heaviness of her mind, to go to her bookseller, and look over and order into the country such new publications as seemed to promise her any pleasure.

She sent, therefore, for a chair, and glad to have devised for herself any amusement, set out in it immediately.

Upon entering the shop, she saw the bookseller engaged in close conference with a man meanly dressed, and much muffled up, who seemed talking to him with uncommon earnestness, and just as she was approaching, said, "To terms I am indifferent, for writing is no labour to me; on the contrary, it is the first delight of my life, and therefore, and not for dirty pelf, I wish to make it my profession."

The speech struck Cecilia, but the voice struck her more, it was Belfield's! and her amazement was so great, that she stopt short to look at him, without heeding a man who attended her, and desired to know her commands.

The bookseller now perceiving her, came forward, and Belfield, turning to see who interrupted them, started as if a spectre had crossed his eyes, flapped his hat over his face, and hastily went out of the shop.

Cecilia checking her inclination to speak to him, from observing his eagerness to escape her, soon recollected her own errand, and employed herself in looking over new books.

Her surprise, however, at a change so sudden in the condition of this young man, and at a declaration of a passion for writing, so opposite to all the sentiments which he had professed at their late meeting in the cottage, awakened in her a strong curiosity to be informed of his situation; and after putting aside some books which she desired to have packed up for her, she asked if the gentleman who had just

left the shop, and who she found by what he had said, was an author, had written anything that was published with his name?

"No, ma'am," answered the bookseller, "nothing of any consequence; he is known, however, to have written several things that have appeared as anonymous; and I fancy, now, soon, we shall see something considerable from him."

"He is about some great work, then?"

"Why no, not exactly that, perhaps, at present; we must feel our way with some little smart *jeu d'esprit* before we undertake a great work. But he is a very great genius, and I doubt not will produce something extraordinary."

"Whatever he produces," said Cecilia, "as I have now chanced to see him, I shall be glad you will, at any time, send to me."

"Certainly, ma'am; but it must be among other things, for he does not choose, just now, to be known: and it is a rule in our business never to tell people's names when they desire to be secret. He is a little out of cash just now, as you may suppose by his appearance, so instead of buying books, he comes to sell them. However, he has taken a very good road to bring himself home again, for we pay very handsomely for things of any merit, especially if they deal smartly in a few touches of the times."

Cecilia chose not to risk any further questions, lest her knowledge of him should be suspected, but got into her chair, and returned to Lady Margaret's.

The sight of Belfield reminded her not only of himself; the gentle Henrietta again took her place in her memory, whence her various distresses and suspenses had of late driven from it every body but Delvile, and those whom Delvile brought into it. But her regard for that amiable girl, though sunk in the busy scenes of her calamitous uncertainties, was only sunk in her own bosom, and ready, upon their removal, to revive with fresh vigour. She was now indeed more unhappy than even in the period of her forgetfulness, yet her mind was no longer filled with the restless turbulence of hope, which still more than despondency unfitted it for thinking of others.

This remembrance thus awakened, awakened also a de-

sire of renewing the connection so long neglected. All scruples concerning Delvile had now lost their foundation, since the doubts from which they arose were both explained and removed; she was certain alike of his indifference to Henrietta, and his separation from herself; she knew that nothing was to be feared from painful or offensive rivalry, and she resolved, therefore, to lose no time in seeking the first pleasure to which since her disappointment she had voluntarily looked forward.

Early in the evening, she told Lady Margaret she was going out for an hour or two, and sending again for a chair, was carried to Portland-street.

She enquired for Miss Belfield, and was shown into a parlour, where she found her drinking tea with her mother, and Mr. Hobson, their landlord.

Henrietta almost screamed at her sight, from a sudden impulse of joy and surprise, and, running up to her, flung her arms round her neck, and embraced her with the most rapturous emotion: but then, drawing back with a look of timidity and shame, she bashfully apologized for her freedom, saying, "Indeed, dearest Miss Beverley, it is no want of respect, but I am so very glad to see you it makes me quite forget myself!"

Cecilia, charmed at a reception so ingenuously affectionate, soon satisfied her doubting diffidence by the warmest thanks that she had preserved so much regard for her, and by doubling the kindness with which she returned her caresses.

"Mercy on me, madam," cried Mrs. Belfield, who during this time had been busily employed in sweeping the hearth, wiping some slops upon the table, and smoothing her handkerchief and apron, "why the girl's enough to smother you. Henny, how can you be so troublesome? I never saw you behave in this way before."

"Miss Beverley, madam," said Henrietta, again retreating, "is so kind as to pardon me, and I was so much surprised at seeing her, that I hardly knew what I was about."

"The young ladies, ma'am," said Mr. Hobson, "have a mighty way of saluting one another till such time as they get husbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any salutation at all. That's my remark, at least,

and what I've seen of the world has set me upon making it."

This speech led Cecilia to check, however artless, the tenderness of her fervent young friend, whom she was much teased by meeting in such company, but who seemed not to dare understand the frequent looks which she gave her expressive of a wish to be alone with her.

"Come, ladies," continued the facetious Mr. Hobson, "what if we were all to sit down and have a good dish of tea? and suppose, Mrs. Belfield, you was to order us a fresh round of toast and butter? do you think the young ladies here would have any objection? and what if we were to have a little more water in the tea-kettle? not forgetting a little more tea in the tea-pot. What I say is this, let us all be comfortable; that's my notion of things."

"And a very good notion too," said Mrs. Belfield, "for you have nothing to vex you. Ah, ma'am, you have heard, I suppose, about my son? gone off! nobody knows where! —left that lord's house where he might have lived like a king, and gone out into the wide world, nobody knows for what!"

"Indeed?" said Cecilia, who, from seeing him in London, concluded he was again with his family, "and has he not acquainted you where he is?"

"No, ma'am, no," cried Mrs. Belfield, "he's never once told me where he is gone, nor let me know the least about the matter, for if I did, I would not taste a dish of tea again for a twelvemonth till I saw him get back again to that lord's! and I believe in my heart there's never such another in the three kingdoms, for he has sent here after him I dare say a score of times. And no wonder, for I will take upon me to say he won't find his fellow in a hurry, lord as he is."

"As to his being a lord," said Mr. Hobson, "I am one of them that lay no great stress upon that, unless he has got a good long purse of his own, and then, to be sure, a lord's no bad thing. But as to the matter of saying Lord such a one, how d'ye do? and Lord such a one, what do you want? and such sort of compliments, why, in my mind, it's a mere nothing, in comparison of a good income. As to your son, ma'am, he did not go the right way to work.

He should have begun with business, and gone into pleasure afterwards: and if he had but done that, I'll be bold to say we might have had him at this very minute drinking tea with us over this fire-side."

"My son, sir," said Mrs. Belfield, rather angrily, "was another sort of a person than a person of business; he always despised it from a child, and come of it what may, I am sure he was born to be a gentleman."

"As to his despising business," said Mr. Hobson, very contemptuously, "why so much the worse, for business is no such despiseable thing. And if he had been brought up behind a counter, instead of dangling after these same Lords, why he might have had a house of his own over his head, and been as good a man as myself."

"A house over his head?" said Mrs. Belfield, "why he might have had what he would, and have done what he would, if he had but followed my advice, and put himself a little forward. I have told him a hundred times to ask some of those great people he lived amongst for a place at court, for I know they've so many they hardly know what to do with them, and it was always my design from the beginning that he should be something of a great man; but I never could persuade him, though, for anything I know, as I have often told him, if he had but had a little courage he might have been an ambassador by this time. And now, all of a sudden, to be gone nobody knows where!"—

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, who knew not whether most to pity or wonder at her blind folly; "but I doubt not you will hear of him soon."

"As to being an ambassador, ma'am," said Mr. Hobson, "it's talking quite out of character. Those sort of great people keep things of that kind for their own poor relations and cousins. What I say is this; a man's best way is to take care of himself. The more those great people see you want them, the less they like your company. Let every man be brought up to business, and then when he's made his fortune, he may walk with his hat on. Why now there was your friend, ma'am," turning to Cecilia, "that shot out his brains without paying any body a souse; pray how was that being more genteel than standing behind a counter, and not owing a shilling?"

"Do you think a young lady," cried Mrs. Belfield, warmly, "can bear to hear of such a thing as standing behind a counter? I am sure if my son had ever done it, I should not expect any lady would so much as look at him. And yet, though I say it, she might look a good while, and not see many such persons, let her look where she pleased. And then he has such a winning manner into the bargain, that I believe in my heart there's never a lady in the land could say no to him. And yet he has such a prodigious shyness, I never could make him own he had so much as asked the question. And what lady can begin first?"

"Why no," said Mr. Hobson, "that would be out of character another way. Now my notion is this; let every man be agreeable! and then he may ask what lady he pleases.—And when he's a mind of a lady, he should look upon a frown or two as nothing; for the ladies frown in courtship as a thing of course; it's just like a man's swearing at a coachman; why he's not a bit more in a passion, only he thinks he sha'n't be minded without it."

"Well, for my part," said Mrs. Belfield, "I am sure if I was a young lady, and most especially if I was a young lady of fortune, and all that, I should like a modest young gentleman, such as my son, for example, better by half than a bold swearing young fellow, that would make a point to have me whether I would or no."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Mr. Hobson; "but the young ladies are not of that way of thinking; they are all for a little life and spirit. Don't I say right, young ladies?"

Cecilia, who could not but perceive that these speeches were levelled at herself, felt offended and tired; and finding she had no chance of any private conversation with Henrietta, arose to take leave: but while she stopped her in the passage to enquire when she could see her alone, a footman knocked at the door, who, having asked if Mr. Belfield lodged there, and been answered in the affirmative, begged to know whether Miss Beverley was then in the house?

Cecilia, much surprised, went forward, and told him who she was.

"I have been, madam," said he, "with a message to you at Mr. Monckton's, in Soho-square: but nobody knew where you was: and Mr. Monckton came out and spoke to

me himself, and said that all he could suppose was that you might be at this house. So he directed me to come here."

"And from whom, sir, is your message?"

"From the honourable Mr. Delvile, madam, in St. James's-square. He desires to know if you shall be at home on Saturday morning, the day after to-morrow, and whether you can appoint Mr. Briggs to meet him by twelve o'clock exactly, as he sha'n't be able to stay above three minutes."

Cecilia gave an answer as cold as the message; that she would be in Soho-square at the time he mentioned, and acquaint Mr. Briggs of his intention.

The footman then went away; and Henrietta told her, that if she could call some morning she might perhaps contrive to be alone with her, and added, "indeed I wish much to see you, if you could possibly do me so great an honour; for I am very miserable, and have nobody to tell so! Ah, Miss Beverley! you that have so many friends, and that deserve as many again, you little know what a hard thing it is to have none!—but my brother's strange disappearing has half broke our hearts!"

Cecilia was beginning a consolatory speech, in which she meant to give her private assurances of his health and safety, when she was interrupted by Mr. Albany, who came suddenly into the passage.

Henrietta received him with a look of pleasure, and enquired why he had so long been absent; but, surprised by the sight of Cecilia, he exclaimed, without answering her, "why didst thou fail me? why appoint me to a place thou wert quitting thyself?—thou thing of fair professions! thou inveigler of esteem! thou vain, delusive promiser of pleasure!"

"You condemn me too hastily," said Cecilia; "if I failed in my promise, it was not owing to caprice or insincerity, but to a real and bitter misfortune which incapacitated me from keeping it. I shall soon, however,—nay, I am already at your disposal, if you have any commands for me."

"I have always," answered he, "commands for the rich, for I have always compassion for the poor."

"Come to me, then, at Mr. Monckton's in Soho-square," cried she, and hastened into her chair, impatient to end a

conference which she saw excited the wonder of the servants, and which also now drew out from the parlour Mr. Hobson and Mrs. Belfield. She then kissed her hand to Henrietta, and ordered the chairmen to carry her home.

It had not been without difficulty that she had restrained herself from mentioning what she knew of Belfield, when she found his mother and sister in a state of such painful uncertainty concerning him. But her utter ignorance of his plans, joined to her undoubted knowledge of his wish of concealment, made her fear doing mischief by officiousness, and think it wiser not to betray what she had seen of him, till better informed of his own views and intentions. Yet, willing to shorten a suspense so uneasy to them, she determined to entreat Mr. Monckton would endeavour to find him out, and acquaint him with their anxiety.

That gentleman, when she returned to his house, was in a state of mind by no means enviable. Missing her at tea, he had asked Miss Bennet where she was, and hearing she had not left word, he could scarce conceal his chagrin. Knowing, however, how few were her acquaintances in town, he soon concluded she was with Miss Belfield, but, not satisfied with sending Mr. Delvile's messenger after her, he privately employed one in whom he trusted for himself, to make enquiries at the house without saying whence he came.

But though this man was returnred, and he knew her safety, he still felt alarmed; he had flattered himself, from the length of time in which she had now done nothing without consulting him, she would scarce even think of any action without his previous concurrence. And he had hoped, by a little longer use, to make his counsel become necessary, which he knew to be a very short step from rendering it absolute.

Nor was he well pleased to perceive, by this voluntary excursion, a struggle to cast off her sadness, and a wish to procure herself entertainment: it was not that he desired her misery, but he was earnest that all relief from it should spring from himself; and though far from displeased that Delvile should lose his sovereignty over her thoughts, he was yet of opinion that, till his own liberty was restored, he had less to apprehend from grief indulged, than grief

allayed; one could but lead her to repining retirement, the other might guide her to a consolatory rival.

He well knew, however, it was as essential to his cause to disguise his disappointments as his expectations, and, certain that by pleasing alone he had any chance of acquiring power, he cleared up when Cecilia returned, who as unconscious of feeling, as of owing any subjection to him, preserved uncontrolled the right of acting for herself, however desirous and glad of occasional instruction.

She told him where she had been, and related her meeting Belfield, and the unhappiness of his friends, and hinted her wish that he could be informed what they suffered. Mr. Monckton, eager to oblige her, went instantly in search of him, and returning to supper, told her he had traced him through the bookseller, who had not the dexterity to parry his artful enquiries, and had actually appointed him to breakfast in Soho-square the next morning.

He had found him, he said, writing, but in high spirits and good humour. He had resisted, for a while, his invitation on account of his dress, all his clothes but the very coat which he had on being packed up and at his mother's: but, when laughed at by Mr. Monckton for still retaining some foppery, he gaily protested what remained of it should be extinguished; and acknowledging that his shame was no part of his philosophy, declared he would throw it wholly aside, and, in spite of his degradation, renew his visits at his house.

"I would not tell him," Mr. Monckton continued, "of the anxiety of his family; I thought it would come more powerfully from yourself, who, having seen, can better enforce it."

Cecilia was very thankful for this compliance with her request, and anticipated the pleasure she hoped soon to give Henrietta, by the restoration of a brother so much loved and so regretted.

She sent, meantime, to Mr. Briggs the message she had received from Mr. Delvile, and had the satisfaction of an answer that he would observe the appointment.

CHAPTER IX.

A CONFABULATION.

THE next morning, while the family were at breakfast, Belfield, according to his promise, made his visit.

A high colour overspread his face as he entered the room, resulting from a sensation of grief at his fallen fortune, and shame at his altered appearance, which though he endeavoured to cover under an air of gaiety and unconcern, gave an awkwardness to his manners, and a visible distress to his countenance: Mr. Monckton received him with pleasure, and Cecilia, who saw the conflict of his philosophy with his pride, dressed her features once more in smiles, which, however faint and heartless, showed her desire to re-assure him. Miss Bennet, as usual when not called upon by the master or lady of the house, sat as a cypher; and Lady Margaret, always disagreeable and repulsive to the friends of her husband, though she was not now more than commonly ungracious, struck the quick-feeling and irritable Belfield to wear an air of rude superiority meant to reproach him with his disgrace.

This notion, which strongly affected him, made him, for one instant, hesitate whether he should remain another in the same room with her: but the friendliness of Mr. Monckton, and the gentleness and good breeding of Cecilia, seemed so studious to make amends for her moroseness, that he checked his too ready indignation, and took his seat at the table. Yet was it some time before he could recover, even the assumed vivacity which this suspected insult had robbed him of, sufficiently to enter into conversation with any appearance of ease or pleasure. But, after a while, soothed by the attentions of Cecilia and Mr. Monckton, his uneasiness wore off, and the native spirit and liveliness of his character broke forth with their accustomed energy.

"This good company, I hope," said he, addressing himself, however, only to Cecilia, "will not so much *mistake the*

thing as to criticise my dress of this morning; since it is perfectly according to rule, and to rule established from time immemorial: but lest any of you should so much err as to fancy shabby what is only characteristic, I must endeavour to be beforehand with the malice of conjecture, and have the honour to inform you, that I am enlisted in the Grub-street[1] regiment, of the third story, and under the tattered banner of scribbling volunteers! a race which, if it boasts not the courage of heroes, at least equals them in enmity. This coat, therefore, is merely the uniform of my corps, and you will all, I hope, respect it as emblematical of wit and erudition."

"We must at least respect you," said Cecilia, "who thus gaily can sport with it."

"Ah, madam!" said he, more seriously, "it is not from you I ought to look for respect! I must appear to you the most unsteady and coward-hearted of beings. But lately I blushed to see you from poverty, though more worthily employed than when I had been seen by you in affluence; that shame vanquished, another equally narrow took its place, and yesterday I blushed again that you detected me in a new pursuit, though I had only quitted my former one from a conviction it was ill chosen. There seems in human nature a worthlessness not to be conquered! yet I will struggle with it to the last, and either die in the attempt, or dare seem that which I am, without adding to the miseries of life the sting, the envenomed sting, of dastardly false shame!"

"Your language is wonderfully altered within this twelve-

[1] Grub Street, Cripplegate, now called Milton Street. "Grub Street, the name of a street in London much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub Street."—*Dr. Johnson's Dictionary.*

"I have had the pleasure to meet him" (Dr. Johnson) "again at Mrs. Reynolds's, when he offered to take me with him to Grub-Street, to see the ruins of the house demolished there in the late riots" (of 1780) "by a mob that, as he observed, could be no friend to the Muses! He inquired if I had ever yet visited Grub-Street, but was obliged to restrain his anger when I answered 'No,' because he acknowledged he had never paid his respects to it himself. 'However,' says he, 'you and I, Burney, will go together; we have a very good right to go, so we'll visit the mansions of our progenitors, and take up our own freedom together.'"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 415, vol. i.

month," said Mr. Monckton; "the *worthlessness of human nature!* the *miseries of life!* this from you! so lately the champion of human nature, and the panegyrist of human life!"

"Soured by personal disappointment," answered he, "I may perhaps speak with too much acrimony; yet, ultimately, my opinions have not much changed. Happiness is given to us with more liberality than we are willing to confess; it is judgment only that is dealt us sparingly, and of that we have so little, that when felicity is before us, we turn to the right or left, or when at the right or left, we proceed strait forward. It has been so with me; I have sought it at a distance, amidst difficulty and danger, when all that I could wish has been immediately within my grasp."

"It must be owned," said Mr. Monckton, "after what you have suffered from this world you were wont to defend, there is little reason to wonder at some change in your opinion."

"Yet whatever have been my sufferings," he answered, "I have generally been involved in them by my own rashness or caprice. My last enterprise especially, from which my expectations were highest, was the most ill judged of any. I considered not how little my way of life had fitted me for the experiment I was making, how irreparably I was enervated by long sedentary habits, and how insufficient for bodily strength was mental resolution. We may fight against partial prejudices, and by spirit and fortitude we may overcome them; but it will not do to war with the general tenor of education. We may blame, despise, regret as we please, but customs long established, and habits long indulged, assume an empire despotic, though their power is but prescriptive. Opposing them is vain; Nature herself, when forced aside, is not more elastic in her rebound."

"Will you not then," said Cecilia, "since your experiment has failed, return again to your family, and to the plan of life you formerly settled?"

"You speak of them together," said he, with a smile, "as if you thought them inseparable; and indeed my own apprehension they would be deemed so, has made me thus fear to see my friends, since I love not resistance, yet cannot again attempt the plan of life they would have me

pursue. I have given up my cottage, but my independence is as dear to me as ever; and all that I have gathered from experience, is to maintain it by those employments for which my education has fitted me, instead of seeking it injudiciously by the very road for which it has unqualified me."

"And what is this independence," cried Mr. Monckton, "which has thus bewitched your imagination? a mere idle dream of romance and enthusiasm; without existence in nature, without possibility in life. In uncivilized countries, or in lawless times, independence, for a while, may perhaps stalk abroad: but in a regular government, 'tis only the vision of a heated brain; one part of a community must inevitably hang upon another, and 'tis a farce to call either independent, when to break the chain by which they are linked would prove destruction to both. The soldier wants not the officer more than the officer the soldier; nor the tenant the landlord, more than the landlord the tenant. The rich owe their distinction, their luxuries, to the poor, as much as the poor owe their rewards, their necessaries, to the rich."

"Man, treated as an automaton," answered Bolfield, "and considered merely with respect to his bodily operations, may indeed be called dependent, since the food by which he lives, or, rather, without which he dies, cannot wholly be cultivated and prepared by his own hands: but considered in a nobler sense, he deserves not the degrading epithet; speak of him, then, as a being of feeling and understanding, with pride to alarm, with nerves to tremble, with honour to satisfy, and with a soul to be immortal!—as such, may he not claim the freedom of his own thoughts? may not that claim be extended to the liberty of speaking, and the power of being governed by them? and when thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control, will you brand him with dependency merely because the grazier feeds his meat, and the baker kneads his bread?"

"But who is there in the whole world," said Mr. Monckton, "extensive as it is, and dissimilar as are its inhabitants, that can pretend to assert his thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control? even where interest, which you so much disdain, interferes not,—though where that is I

confess I cannot tell!—are we not kept silent where we wish to reprove by the fear of offending? and made speak, where we wish to be silent, by the desire of obliging? do we not bow to the scoundrel as low as to the man of honour? are we not by mere forms kept standing when tired? made give place to those we despise? and smiles to those we hate? or if we refuse these attentions, are we not regarded as savages, and shut out of society?"

"All these," answered Belfield, "are so merely matters of ceremony, that the concession can neither cost pain to the proud, nor give pleasure to the vain. The bow is to the coat, the attention is to the rank, and the fear of offending ought to extend to all mankind. Homage such as this infringes not our sincerity, since it is as much a matter of course as the dress that we wear, and has as little reason to flatter a man as the shadow which follows him. I no more, therefore, hold him deceitful for not opposing this pantomimical parade, than I hold him to be dependent for eating corn he has not sown."

"Where, then, do you draw the line? and what is the boundary beyond which your independence must not step?"

"I hold that man," cried he, with energy, "to be independent, who treats the Great as the Little, and the Little as the Great, who neither exults in riches nor blushes in poverty, who owes no man a groat, and who spends not a shilling he has not earned."

"You will not, indeed, then, have a very numerous acquaintance, if this is the description of those with whom you purpose to associate! but is it possible you imagine you can live by such notions? why the Carthusian in his monastery, who is at least removed from temptation, is not mortified so severely as a man of spirit living in the world, who would prescribe himself such rules."

"Not merely have I prescribed," returned Belfield, "I have already put them in practice; and far from finding any penance, I never before found happiness. I have now adopted, though poor, the very plan of life I should have elected if rich; my pleasure, therefore, is become my business, and my business my pleasure."

"And is this plan," cried Monckton, "nothing more than turning knight-errant to the booksellers?"

"'Tis a knight-errantry," answered Belfield, laughing, "which, however ludicrous it may seem to you, requires more soul and more brains than any other. Our giants may, indeed, be only wind-mills, but they must be attacked with as much spirit, and conquered with as much bravery, as any fort or any town, in time of war should be demolished; and though the siege, I must confess, may be of less national utility, the assailants of the quill have their honour as much at heart as the assailants of the sword."

"I suppose, then," said Monckton, archly, "if a man wants a biting lampoon, or a handsome panegyric, some news-paper scandal, or a sonnet for a lady—"

"No, no," interrupted Belfield, eagerly, "if you imagine me a hireling scribbler for the purposes of defamation or of flattery, you as little know my situation as my character. My subjects shall be my own, and my satire shall be general. I would as much disdain to be personal with an anonymous pen, as to attack an unarmed man in the dark with a dagger I had kept concealed."

A reply of rallying incredulity was rising to the lips of Mr. Monckton, when reading in the looks of Cecilia an entire approbation of this sentiment, he checked his desire of ridicule, and exclaimed, "spoken like a man of honour, and one whose works may profit the world!"

"From my earliest youth to the present hour," continued Belfield, "literature has been the favourite object of my pursuit, my recreation in leisure, and my hope in employment. My propensity to it, indeed, has been so ungovernable, that I may properly call it the source of my several miscarriages throughout life. It was the bar to my preferment, for it gave me a distaste to other studies; it was the cause of my unsteadiness in all my undertakings, because to all I preferred it. It has sunk me to distress, it has involved me in difficulties; it has brought me to the brink of ruin by making me neglect the means of living, yet never, till now, did I discern it might itself be my support."

"I am heartily glad, sir," said Cecilia, "your various enterprizes and struggles have at length ended in a project which promises you so much satisfaction. But you will surely suffer your sister and your mother to partake of

it? for who is there that your prosperity will make so happy?"

"You do them infinite honour, madam, by taking any interest in their affairs; but to own to you the truth, what to me appears prosperity, will to them wear another aspect. They have looked forward to my elevation with expectations the most improbable, and thought every thing within my grasp, with a simplicity incredible. But though their hopes were absurd, I am pained by their disappointment, and I have not courage to meet their tears, which I am sure will not be spared when they see me."

"'Tis from tenderness, then," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that you are cruel; and from affection to your friends that you make them believe you have forgotten them?"

There was a delicacy in this reproach exactly suited to work upon Belfield, who feeling it with quickness, started up, and cried, "I believe I am wrong!—I will go to them this moment!"

Cecilia felt eager to second the generous impulse; but Mr. Monckton, laughing at his impetuosity, insisted he should first finish his breakfast.

"Your friends," said Cecilia, "can have no mortification so hard to bear as your voluntary absence; and if they see but that you are happy, they will soon be reconciled to whatever situation you may choose."

"Happy!" repeated he, with animation, "O, I am in paradise! I am come from a region in the first rude state of nature, to civilization and refinement! the life I led at the cottage was the life of a savage; no intercourse with society, no consolation from books; my mind locked up, every source dried of intellectual delight, and no enjoyment in my power but from sleep and from food. Weary of an existence which thus levelled me with a brute, I grew ashamed of the approximation, and listening to the remonstrance of my understanding, I gave up the precipitate plan, to pursue one more consonant to reason. I came to town, hired a room, and sent for pen, ink, and paper: what I have written are trifles, but the bookseller has not rejected them. I was settled, therefore, in a moment, and comparing my new occupation with that I had just quitted, I seemed exalted on the sudden from a mere creature of instinct, to

a rational and intelligent being. But when I first opened a book, after so long an abstinence from all mental nourishment,—O, it was rapture! no half-famished beggar regaled suddenly with food ever seized on his repast with more hungry avidity."

"Let fortune turn which way it will," cried Monckton, "you may defy all its malice, while possessed of a spirit of enjoyment which nothing can subdue!"

"But were you not, sir," said Cecilia, "as great an enthusiast the other day for your cottage, and for labour?"

"I was, madam; but there my philosophy was erroneous: in my ardour to fly from meanness and from dependence, I thought in labour and retirement I should find freedom and happiness; but I forgot that my body was not seasoned for such work, and considered not that a mind which had once been opened by knowledge, could ill endure the contraction of dark and perpetual ignorance. The approach, however, of winter, brought me acquainted with my mistake. It grew cold, it grew bleak; little guarded against the inclemency of the weather, I felt its severity in every limb, and missed a thousand indulgencies which in possession I had never valued. To rise at break of day, chill, freezing, and comfortless! no sun abroad, no fire at home! to go out in all weather to work, that work rough, coarse, and laborious!—unused to such hardships, I found I could not bear them, and, however unwillingly, was compelled to relinquish the attempt."

Breakfast now being over, he again arose to take leave.

"You are going then, sir," said Cecilia, "immediately to your friends?"

"No, madam," answered he, hesitating, "not just this moment; to-morrow morning, perhaps,—but it is now late, and I have business for the rest of the day."

"Ah, Mr. Monckton!" cried Cecilia, "what mischief have you done by occasioning this delay!"

"This goodness, madam," said Belfield, "my sister can never sufficiently acknowledge. But I will own, that though, just now, in a warm moment, I felt eager to present myself to her and my mother, I rather wish, now I am cooler, to be saved the pain of telling them in person my situation. I mean, therefore, first to write to them."

"You will not fail, then, to see them to-morrow?"

"Certainly—I think not."

"Nay, but certainly you *must* not, for I shall call upon them to-day, and assure them they may expect you. Can I soften your task of writing by giving them any message from you?"

"Ah, madam, have a care!" cried he; "this condescension to a poor author may be more dangerous than you have any suspicion! and before you have power to help yourself, you may see your name prefixed to the dedication of some trumpery pamphlet!"

"I will run," cried she, "all risks; remember, therefore, you will be responsible for the performance of my promise."

"I will be sure," answered he, "not to forget what reflects so much honour upon myself."

Cecilia was satisfied by this assent, and he then went away,

"A strange, flighty character!" cried Mr. Monckton, "yet of uncommon capacity, and full of genius. Were he less imaginative, wild and eccentric, he has abilities for any station, and might fix and distinguish himself almost wherever he pleased."

"I knew not," said Cecilia, "the full worth of steadiness and prudence till I knew this young man; for he has everything else; talents the most striking, a love of virtue the most elevated, and manners the most pleasing; yet, wanting steadiness and prudence, he can neither act with consistency nor prosper with continuance."

"He is well enough," said Lady Margaret, who had heard the whole argument in sullen taciturnity, "he is well enough, I say; and there comes no good from young women's being so difficult."

Cecilia, offended by a speech which implied a rude desire to dispose of her, went up stairs to her own room; and Mr. Monckton, always enraged when young men and Cecilia were alluded to in the same sentence, retired to his library.

She then ordered a chair, and went to Portland-street, to fulfil what she had offered to Belfield, and to revive his mother and sister by the pleasure of the promised interview.

She found them together; and her intelligence being of equal consequence to both, she did not now repine at the

presence of Mrs. Belfield. She made her communication with the most cautious attention to their characters, softening the ill she had to relate with respect to Belfield's present way of living, by endeavouring to awaken affection and joy from the prospect of the approaching meeting. She counselled them as much as possible to restrain their chagrin at his misfortunes, which he would but construe into reproach of his ill management; and she represented that when once he was restored to his family, he might almost imperceptibly be led into some less wild and more profitable way of business.

When she had told all she thought proper to relate, kindly interspersing her account with the best advice and best comfort she could suggest, she made an end of her visit; for the affliction of Mrs. Belfield, upon hearing the actual situation of her son, was so clamorous and unappeasable, that, little wondering at Belfield's want of courage to encounter it, and having no opportunity in such a storm to console the soft Henrietta, whose tears flowed abundantly that her brother should thus be fallen, she only promised before she left town to see her again, and beseeching Mrs. Belfield to moderate her concern, was glad to leave the house where her presence had no power to quiet their distress.

She passed the rest of the day in sad reflections upon the meeting she was to have the next morning with Mr. Delvile. She wished ardently to know whether his son was gone abroad; and whether Mrs. Delvile, whose health in her own letter was mentioned in terms the most melancholy, was yet recovered; yet neither of these enquiries could she even think of making, since reasonably, without them, apprehensive of some reproach.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

A WRANGLING.

MR. MONCKTON, the next day, as soon as breakfast was over, went out, to avoid showing, even to Cecilia, the anxiety he felt concerning the regulation of her fortune, and arrangement of her affairs. He strongly, however, advised her not to mention her large debt, which, though contracted in the innocence of the purest benevolence, would incur nothing but reproof and disapprobation from all who only heard of it when they heard of its inutility.

At eleven o'clock, though an hour before the time appointed, while Cecilia was sitting in Lady Margaret's dressing-room, "with sad civility and an aching head," she was summoned to Mr. Briggs in the parlour.

He immediately began reproaching her with having eloped from him in the summer, and with the various expenses she had caused him from useless purchases and spoiled provisions. He then complained of Mr. Delvile, whom he charged with defrauding him of his dues; but observing, in the midst of his railing, her dejection of countenance, he suddenly broke off, and looking at her with some concern, said, "what's the matter, Ducky? a'nt well? look as if you could not help it."

"O yes," cried Cecilia, "I thank you, sir, I am very well."

"What do look so blank for, then?" said he, "hay? what are fretting for?—crossed in love?—lost your sweetheart?"

"No, no, no," cried she, with quickness.

"Never mind, my chick, never mind," said he, pinching her cheek, with resumed good humour, "more to be had; if one won't snap, another will; put me in a passion by

going off from me with that old grandee, or would have got one long ago. Hate that old Don; used me very ill; wish I could trounce him. Thinks more of a fusty old parchment than the price of stocks. Fit for nothing but to be stuck upon an old monument for a death's head."

He then told her that her accounts were all made out, and he was ready at any time to produce them; he approved much of her finishing wholly with the *old Don*, who had been a mere cypher in the executorship; but he advised her not to think of taking her money into her own hands, as he was willing to keep the charge of it himself till she was married.

Cecilia, thanking him for the offer, said she meant now to make her acknowledgments for all the trouble he had already taken, but by no means purposed to give him any more.

He debated the matter with her warmly, told her she had no chance to save herself from knaves and cheats, but by trusting to nobody but himself, and informing her what interest he had already made of her money, enquired how she would set about getting more?

Cecilia, though prejudiced against him by Mr. Monckton, knew not how to combat his arguments, yet conscious that scarce any part of the money to which he alluded was in fact her own, she could not yield to them. He was, however, so stubborn and so difficult to deal with, that she at length let him talk without troubling herself to answer, and privately determined to beg Mr. Monckton would fight her battle.

She was not, therefore, displeased by his interruption, though very much surprised by the sight of his person, when, in the midst of Mr. Briggs's oratory, Mr. Hobson entered the parlour.

"I ask pardon, ma'am," cried he, "if I intrude; but I made free to call upon the account of two ladies that are acquaintances of yours, that are quite, as one may say, at their wit's ends."

"What is the matter with them, sir?"

"Why, ma'am, no great matter, but mothers are soon frightened, and when once they are upon the fret, one may as well talk to the boards! they know no more of reasoning and arguing, than they do of a shop ledger! however, my maxim is this; everybody in their way; one has no more

right to expect courageousness from a lady in them cases, than one has from a child in arms; for what I say is, they have not the proper use of their heads, which makes it very excusable."

"But what has occasioned any alarm? nothing, I hope, is the matter with Miss Belfield?"

"No, ma'am; thank God, the young lady enjoys her health very well: but she is taking on just in the same way as her mamma, as what can be more natural? Example, ma'am, is apt to be catching, and one lady's crying makes another think she must do the same, for a little thing serves for a lady's tears, being they can cry at any time: but a man is quite of another nature; let him but have a good conscience, and be clear of the world, and I'll engage he'll not wash his face without soap! that's what I say!"

"Will, will!" cried Mr. Briggs, "do it myself! never use soap; nothing but waste; take a little sand; does as well."[1]

"Let every man have his own proposal;" answered Hobson; "for my part, I take every morning a large bowl of water, and souse my whole head in it; and then when I've rubbed it dry, on goes my wig, and I am quite fresh and agreeable: and then I take a walk in Tottenham Court-road as far as the Tabernacle, or thereabouts, and snuff in a little fresh country air, and then I come back, with a good wholesome appetite, and in a fine breathing heat, asking the young lady's pardon; and I enjoy my pot of fresh tea, and my round of hot toast and butter, with as good a relish as if I was a prince."

"Pot of fresh tea!" cried Briggs, "bring a man to ruin; toast and butter! never suffer it in my house. Breakfast on water-gruel, sooner done; fills one up in a second. Give it my servants; can't eat much of it, bob 'em there!" nodding significantly.

[1] "Mr. Nollekens was not very particular as to the material he used to render his skin clean. Whenever he had been modelling, a small bit of clay commonly answered the purpose." When he was shaved, he placed one of Mrs. Nollekens's curling-papers, which he had untwisted for the purpose, upon his right shoulder, upon which the barber wiped his razor. On leaving the barber's shop, Mr. Nollekens folded up the paper, and carried it home in his hand, for the purpose of using it next morning, when he washed himself.—*See* SMITH'S *Nollekens and his Times*, for many traits like those in the character of Briggs.

"Water-gruel!" exclaimed Mr. Hobson, "why I could not get it down if I might have the world for it! it would make me quite sick, asking the young lady's pardon, by reason I should always think I was preparing for the small-pox. My notion is quite of another nature; the first thing I do is to have a good fire; for what I say is this, if a man is cold in his fingers, its odds if ever he gets warm in his purse! ha! ha! *warm;* you take me, sir! I mean a pun. Though I ought to ask pardon, for I suppose the young lady don't know what I am a saying."

"I should indeed be better pleased, sir," said Cecilia, "to hear what you have to say about Miss Belfield."

"Why, ma'am, the thing is this; we have been expecting the young 'Squire, as I call him, all the morning, and he has never come; so Mrs. Belfield, not knowing where to send after him, was of opinion he might be here, knowing your kindness to him, and that."

"You make the enquiry at the wrong place, sir," said Cecilia, much provoked by the implication it conveyed; "if Mr. Belfield is in this house, you must seek him with Mr. Monckton."

"You take no offence, I hope, ma'am, at my just asking of the question? for Mrs. Belfield crying, and being in that dilemma, I thought I could do not less than oblige her by coming to see if the young gentleman was here."

"What's this? what's this?" cried Mr. Briggs eagerly; "who are talking of? hay?—who do mean? is this the sweet-heart? eh, Duck?"

"No, no, sir," cried Cecilia.

"No tricks! won't be bit! who is it?—will know; tell me, I say!"

"*I'll* tell you, sir," cried Mr. Hobson; "it's a very handsome young gentleman, with as fine a person, and as genteel a way of behaviour, and withal, as pretty a manner of dressing himself, and that, as any lady need desire. He has no great head for business, as I am told, but the ladies don't stand much upon that topic, being they know nothing of it themselves."

"Has got the ready?" cried Mr. Briggs, impatiently; "can cast an account? that's the point; can come down handsomely? eh?"

"Why as to that, sir, I'm not bound to speak to a gentleman's private affairs. What's my own is my own, and what is another person's is another person's; that's my way of arguing, and that's what I call talking to the purpose."

"Dare say he's a rogue! don't have him, chick. Bet a wager i'n't worth two shillings, and that will go for powder and pomatum; hate a plaistered pate; commonly a numscull: love a good bob jerom."

"Why this is talking quite wide of the mark," said Mr. Hobson, "to suppose a young lady of fortune would marry a man with a bob jerom. What I say is, let everybody follow their nature; that's the way to be comfortable; and then if they pay every one his own, who's a right to call 'em to account, whether they wear a bob-jerom, or a pig-tail down to the calves of their legs?"

"Ay, ay," cried Briggs, sneeringly, "or whether they stuff their gullets with hot rounds of toast and butter."

"And what if they do, sir?" returned Hobson, a little angrily; "when a man's got above the world, where's the harm of living a little genteel? as to a round of toast and butter, and a few oysters, fresh opened, by way of a damper before dinner, no man need be ashamed of them, provided he pays as he goes: and as to living upon water-gruel, and scrubbing one's flesh with sand, one might as well be a galley-slave at once. You don't understand life, sir, I see that."

"Do! do!" cried Briggs, speaking through his shut teeth; "you're out there! oysters!—come to ruin, tell you! bring you to jail!"

"To jail, sir?" exclaimed Hobson, "this is talking quite ungenteel! let every man be civil; that's what *I* say, for that's the way to make everything agreeable: but as to telling a man he'll go to jail, and that, it's tantamount to affronting him."

A rap at the street-door gave now a new relief to Cecilia, who began to grow very apprehensive lest the delight of spending money, thus warmly contested with that of hoarding it, should give rise to a quarrel, which, between two such sturdy champions for their own opinions, might lead to a conclusion rather more rough and violent than she desired to witness: but when the parlour-door opened, instead of Mr. Delvile, whom she now fully expected, Mr. Albany made his entrance.

This was rather distressing, as her real business with her guardians made it proper her conference with them should be undisturbed, and Albany was not a man with whom a hint that she was engaged could be risked; but she had made no preparation to guard against interruption, as her little acquaintance in London had prevented her expecting any visitors.

He advanced with a solemn air to Cecilia, and, looking as if hardly determined whether to speak with severity or gentleness, said, "once more I come to prove thy sincerity; now wilt thou go with me where sorrow calls thee! sorrow thy charity can mitigate?"

"I am very much concerned," she answered, "but indeed at present it is utterly impossible."

"Again," cried he, with a look at once stern and disappointed, "again thou failest me? What wanton trifling! Why shouldst thou thus elate a worn-out mind, only to make it feel its lingering credulity? or why, teaching me to think I had found an angel, so unkindly undeceive me?"

"Indeed," said Cecilia, much affected by this reproof, "if you knew how heavy a loss I had personally suffered—"

"I do know it," cried he, "and I grieved for thee when I heard it. Thou has lost a faithful old friend, a loss which with every setting sun thou may'st mourn, for the rising sun will never repair it! but was that a reason for shunning the duties of humanity? was the sight of death a motive for neglecting the claims of benevolence? ought it not rather to have hastened your fulfilling them? and should not your own suffering experience of the brevity of life have taught you the vanity of all things but preparing for its end?"

"Perhaps so, but my grief at that time made me think only of myself."

"And of what else dost thou think now?"

"Most probably of the same person still!" said she, half smiling, "but yet, believe me, I have real business to transact."

"Frivolous, unmeaning, ever-ready excuses! what business is so important as the relief of a fellow-creature?"

"I shall not, I hope, there," answered she, with alacrity,

"be backward; but at least for this morning I must beg to make you my almoner."

She then took out her purse.

Mr. Briggs and Mr. Hobson, whose quarrel had been suspended by the appearance of a third person, and who had stood during this short dialogue in silent amazement, having first lost their anger in their mutual consternation, now lost their consternation in their mutual displeasure. Mr. Hobson felt offended to hear business spoken of slightly, and Mr. Briggs felt enraged at the sight of Cecilia's ready purse. Neither of them, however, knew which way to interfere, the stern gravity of Albany, joined to a language too lofty for their comprehension, intimidating them both. They took, however, the relief of communing with one another, and Mr. Hobson said in a whisper, "This, you must know, is, I am told, a very particular old gentleman; quite what I call a genius. He comes often to my house, to see my lodger Miss Henny Belfield, though I never happened to light upon him myself, except once in the passage: but what I hear of him is this; he makes a practice, as one may say, of going about into people's houses, to do nothing but find fault."

"Shan't get into mine!" returned Briggs; "promise him that! don't half like him; be bound he's an old sharper."

Cecilia, meantime, enquired what he desired to have.

Half a guinea, he answered.

"Will that do?"

"For those who have nothing," said he, "it is much. Hereafter, you may assist them again. Go but and see their distresses, and you will wish to give them everything."

Mr. Briggs now, when actually between her fingers he saw the half guinea, could contain no longer; he twitched the sleeve of her gown, and pinching her arm, with a look of painful eagerness, said in a whisper, "Don't give it! don't let him have it! chouse him, chouse him! nothing but an old bite!"

"Pardon me, sir," said Cecilia, in a low voice, "his character is very well known to me." And then, disengaging her arm from him, she presented her little offering.

At this sight, Mr. Briggs was almost outrageous, and

losing in his wrath, all fear of the stranger, he burst forth with fury into the following outcries, "Be ruined! see it plainly; be fleeced! be stript! be robbed! won't have a gown to your back! won't have a shoe to your foot! won't have a rag in the world! be a beggar in the street! come to the parish! rot in a jail!—half a guinea at a time!—enough to break the Great Mogul!"

"Inhuman spirit of selfish parsimony!" exclaimed Albany, "repinest thou at this loan, given from thousands to those who have worse than nothing? who pay to-day in hunger for bread they borrowed yesterday from pity? who, to save themselves from the deadly pangs of famine, solicit but what the rich know not when they possess, and miss not when they give?"

"Anan!" cried Briggs; recovering his temper from the perplexity of his understanding, at a discourse to which his ears where wholly unaccustomed, "what d'ye say?"

"If to thyself distress may cry in vain," continued Albany, "if thy own heart resists the suppliant's prayer, callous to entreaty, and hardened in the world, suffer, at least, a creature yet untainted, who melts at sorrow, and who glows with charity, to pay from her vast wealth a generous tax of thankfulness, that fate has not reversed her doom, and those whom she relieves relieve not her!"

"Anan!" was again all the wondering Mr. Briggs could say.

"Pray, ma'am," said Mr. Hobson to Cecilia, "if its no offence, was the gentleman ever a player?"

"I fancy not, indeed!"

"I ask pardon, then, ma'am; I mean no harm; but my notion was, the gentleman might be speaking something by heart."

"Is it but on the stage, humanity exists?" cried Albany, indignantly; "Oh, thither hasten, then, ye monopolizers of plenty! ye selfish, unfeeling engrossers of wealth, which ye dissipate without enjoying, and of abundance, which ye waste while ye refuse to distribute! thither, thither haste, if there humanity exists!"

"As to engrossing," said Mr. Hobson, happy to hear at last a word with which he was familiar, "it's what I never approved myself. My maxim is this; if a man makes

a fair penny, without any underhand dealings, why he has as much a title to enjoy his pleasure as the Chief Justice, or the Lord Chancellor; and its odds but he's as happy as a greater man. Though what I hold to be best of all, is a clear conscience, with a neat income of two or three thousand a year. That's my notion; and I don't think it's a bad one."

"Weak policy of short-sighted ignorance!" cried Albany, "to wish for what, if used, brings care, and if neglected, remorse! Have you not now beyond what nature craves? why then still sigh for more?"

"Why?" cried Mr. Briggs, who by dint of deep attention began now better to comprehend him, "why to buy in, to be sure! ever hear of stocks, eh? know anything of money?"

"Still to make more and more," cried Albany, "and wherefore? To spend in vice and idleness, or hoard in cheerless misery! not to give succour to the wretched, not support the falling; all is for self, however little wanted, all goes to added stores, or added luxury; no fellow-creature served, nor even one beggar relieved!

"Glad of it!" cried Briggs, "glad of it; would not have 'em relieved; don't like 'em; hate a beggar; ought to be all whipt; live upon spunging."

"Why, as to a beggar, I must needs say," cried Mr. Hobson, "I am by no means an approver of that mode of proceeding; being I take 'em all for cheats. For what I say is this: what a man earns, he earns, and it's no man's business to enquire what he spends, for a free-born Englishman is his own master by the nature of the law, and as to his being a subject, why a duke is no more, nor a judge, nor the Lord High Chancellor, and the like of those; which makes it tantamount to nothing, being he is answerable to nobody by the right of Magna Charta: except in cases of treason, felony, and that. But as to a beggar, it's quite another thing; he comes and asks me for money; but what has he to show for it? what does he bring me in exchange? why a long story that he i'n't worth a penny! what's that to me? nothing at all. Let every man have his own; that's my way of arguing."

"Ungentle mortals!" cried Albany, "in wealth ex-

ulting, exulting even in inhumanity! think you these wretched outcasts have less sensibility than yourselves? think you; in cold and hunger, they lose those feelings which, even in voluptuous prosperity, from time to time disturb you? You say they are all cheats? 'tis but the niggard cant of avarice, to lure away remorse from obduracy. Think you the naked wanderer begs from choice? Give him your wealth and try."

"Give him a whip!" cried Briggs, "sha'n't have a souse! send him to Bridewell! nothing but a pauper; hate 'em; hate 'em all! full of tricks; break their own legs, put out their arms, cut off their fingers, snap their own ankles,—all for what? to get at the chink! to chouse us of cash! ought to be well flogged; have 'em all sent to the Thames; worse than the convicts."

"Poor subterfuge of callous cruelty! you cheat yourselves to shun the fraud of others! And yet, how better do you use the wealth so guarded? what nobler purpose can it answer to you, than even a chance to snatch some wretch from sinking? Think less how *much* ye save, and more for *what;* and then consider how thy full coffers may hereafter make reparation for the empty catalogue of thy virtues."

"Anán!" said Mr. Briggs, again lost in perplexity and wonder.

"Oh, yet," continued Albany, turning towards Cecilia, "preach not here the hardness which ye practice; rather amend yourselves than corrupt her; and give with liberality what ye ought to receive with gratitude!"

"This is not my doctrine," cried Hobson; "I am not a near man, neither; but as to giving at that rate, it's quite out of character. I have as good a right to my own savings, as to my own gettings; and what I say is this, who'll give to *me?* Let me see that, and it's quite another thing: and begin who will, I'll be bound to go on with him, pound for pound, or pence for pence. But as to giving to them beggars, it's what I don't approve; I pay the poor's rate, and that's what I call charity enough for any man. But for the matter of living well, and spending one's money handsomely, and having one's comforts about one, why it's a thing of another nature, and I can say this for myself,

and that is, I never grudged myself anything in my life. I always made myself agreeable, and lived on the best. That's my way."

"Bad way too," cried Briggs, "never get on with it, never see beyond your nose; won't be worth a plumb while your head wags!" Then, taking Cecilia apart, "hark'ee, my duck," he added, pointing to Albany, "Who is that Mr. Bounce, eh? what is he?"

"I have known him but a short time, sir; but I think of him very highly."

"Is he a *good* man? that's the point, is he a *good* man?"

"Indeed he appears to me uncommonly benevolent and charitable."

"But that i'n't the thing; is he *warm?* that's the point, is he *warm?*"

"If you mean *passionate*," said Cecilia, "I believe the energy of his manner is merely to enforce what he says."

"Don't take me, don't take me," cried he, impatiently; "can come down with the ready, that's the matter; can chink the little gold boys? eh?"

"Why I rather fear not, by his appearance; but I know nothing of his affairs."

"What does come for? eh? come a courting?"

"Mercy on me, no!"

"What for then? only a spunging?"

"No, indeed. He seems to have no wish but to assist and plead for others."

"All fudge! think he i'n't touched? ay, ay; nothing but a trick! only to get at the chink: see he's as poor as a rat, talks of nothing but giving money; a bad sign! if he'd got any would not do it. Wanted to make us come down; warrant thought to bam us all! out there! a'n't so soon gulled."

A knock at the street-door gave now a new interruption, and Mr. Delvile at length appeared.

Cecilia, whom his sight could not fail to disconcert, felt doubly distressed by the unnecessary presence of Albany and Hobson; she regretted the absence of Mr. Monckton, who could easily have taken them away; for though without scruple she could herself have acquainted Mr. Hobson

she had business, she dreaded offending Albany, whose esteem she was ambitious of obtaining.

Mr. Delvile entered the room with an air stately and erect; he took off his hat, but deigned not to make the smallest inclination of his head, nor offered any excuse to Mr. Briggs for being past the hour of his appointment: but having advanced a few paces, without looking either to the right or left, said, "as I have never acted, my coming may not, perhaps, be essential; but as my name is in the Dean's will, and I have once or twice met the other executors mentioned in it, I think it a duty I owe to my own heirs to prevent any possible future enquiry or trouble to them."

This speech was directly addressed to no one, though meant to be attended to by every one, and seemed proudly uttered as a mere apology to himself for not having declined the meeting.

Cecilia, though she recovered from her confusion by the help of her aversion to this self-sufficiency, made not any answer. Albany retired to a corner of the room; Mr. Hobson began to believe it was time for him to depart, and Mr. Briggs, thinking only of the quarrel in which he had separated with Mr. Delvile in the summer, stood swelling with venom, which he longed for an opportunity to spit out.

Mr. Delvile, who regarded this silence as the effect of his awe-inspiring presence, became rather more complacent; but casting his eyes round the room, and perceiving the two strangers, he was visibly surprised, and looking at Cecilia for some explanation, seemed to stand suspended from the purpose of his visit till he heard one.

Cecilia, earnest to have the business concluded, turned to Mr. Briggs, and said, "Sir, here is pen and ink: are you to write, or am I? or what is to be done?"

"No, no," said he, with a sneer, "give it t'other; all in our turn; don't come before his Grace the Right Honourable Mr. Vampus."

"Before whom, sir?" said Mr. Delvile, reddening.

"Before my Lord Don Pedigree," answered Briggs, with a spiteful grin, "know him? eh? ever hear of such a person?"

Mr. Delvile coloured still deeper, but turning contemptuously from him, disdained making any reply.

Mr. Briggs, who now regarded him as a defeated man, said exultingly to Mr. Hobson, "What do you stand here for?—hay?—fall o' your marrowbones; don't see 'Squire High and Mighty?"

"As to falling on my marrowbones," answered Mr. Hobson, "it's what I shall do to no man, except he was the King himself, or the like of that, and going to make me Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Commissioner of Excise. Not that I mean the gentleman any offence; but a man's a man, and for one man to worship another is quite out of law."

"Must, must!" cried Briggs, "tell all his old granddads else; keeps 'em in a roll; locks 'em in a closet; says his prayers to 'em; can't live without 'em: likes 'em better than cash!—wish had 'em here! pop 'em all in the sink!"

"If your intention, sir," cried Mr. Delvile, fiercely, "is only to insult me, I am prepared for what measures I shall take. I declined seeing you in my own house, that I might not be under the same restraint as when it was my unfortunate lot to meet you last."

"Who cares?" cried Briggs, with an air of defiance, "what can do, eh? poke me into a family vault? bind me o' top of an old monument? tie me to a stinking carcase? make a corpse of me, and call it one of your famous cousins?—"

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Briggs," interrupted Cecilia, who saw that Mr. Delvile, trembling with passion, scarce refrained lifting up his stick, "be appeased, and let us finish our business!"

Albany now, hearing in Cecilia's voice the alarm with which she was seized, came forward and exclaimed, "whence this unmeaning dissention? to what purpose this irritating abuse? O, vain and foolish! live ye so happily, last ye so long, that time and peace may thus be trifled with?"

"There, there!" cried Briggs, holding up his finger at Mr. Delvile, "have it now! got old Mr. Bounce upon you! give you enough of it; promise you that!"

"Restrain," continued Albany, "this idle wrath; and if ye have ardent passions, employ them to nobler uses; let

them stimulate acts of virtue, let them animate deeds of beneficence! O, waste not spirits that may urge you to good, lead you to honour, warm you to charity, in poor and angry words, in unfriendly, unmanly debate!"

Mr. Delvile, who from the approach of Albany, had given him his whole attention, was struck with astonishment at this address, and almost petrified with wonder at his language and exhortations.

"Why, I must own," said Mr. Hobson, "as to this matter I am much of the same mind myself; for quarreling's a thing I don't uphold, being it advances one no way; for what I say is this, if a man gets the better, he's only where he was before, and if he gets worsted, why it's odds but the laugh's against him: so, if I may make bold to give my verdict, I would have one of these gentlemen take the other by the hand, and so put an end to bad words. That's my maxim, and that's what I call being agreeable."

Mr. Delvile, at the words *one of these gentlemen take the other by the hand*, looked scornfully upon Mr. Hobson, with a frown that expressed his highest indignation, at being thus familiarly coupled with Mr. Briggs. And then, turning from him to Cecilia, haughtily said, "Are these two persons," pointing towards Albany and Hobson, "waiting here to be witnesses to any transaction?"

"No, sir, no," cried Hobson, "I don't mean to intrude, I am going directly. So you can give me no insight, ma'am," addressing Cecilia, "as to where I might light upon Mr. Belfield?"

"Me? no!" cried she, much provoked by observing that Mr. Delvile suddenly looked at her.

"Well, ma'am, well, I mean no harm; only I hold it that the right way to hear of a young gentleman, is to ask for him of a young lady: that's my maxim. Come, sir," to Mr. Briggs, "you and I had like to have fallen out, but what I say is this; let no man bear malice; that's my way: so I hope we part without ill blood?"

"Ay, ay;" said Mr. Briggs, giving him a nod.

"Well, then," added Hobson, "I hope the good-will may go round, and that not only you and I, but these two good old gentlemen will also lend a hand."

Mr. Delvile now was at a loss which way to turn for

very rage; but, after looking at everyone with a face flaming with fire, he said to Cecilia, "If you have collected together these persons for the purpose of affronting me, I must beg you to remember I am not one to be affronted with impunity!"

Cecilia, half frightened, was beginning an answer that disclaimed any such intention, when Albany, with the most indignant energy, called out, "Oh, pride of heart, with littleness of soul! check this vile arrogance, too vain for man, and spare to others some part of that lenity thou nourishest for thyself, or justly bestow on thyself that contempt thou nourishest for others!"[1]

And with those words he sternly left the house.

The thunderstruck Mr. Delvile began now to fancy that all the demons of torment were designedly let loose upon him, and his surprise and resentment operated so powerfully that it was only in broken sentences he could express either. "Very extraordinary!—a new method of conduct!—liberties to which I am not much used!—impertinences I shall not hastily forget,—treatment that would scarce be pardonable to a person wholly unknown!—"

"Why indeed, sir," said Hobson, "I can't but say it was rather a cut-up; but the old gentleman is what one may call a genius, which makes it a little excusable; for he does things all his own way, and I am told it's the same thing who he speaks to, so he can but find fault, and that."

"Sir," interrupted the still more highly offended Mr. Delvile, "what *you* may be told is extremely immaterial to *me*; and I must take the liberty to hint to you, a conversation of this easy kind is not what I am much in practice in hearing."

"Sir, I ask pardon," said Hobson, "I meant nothing but what was agreeable; however, I have done, and I wish you

[1] "All probability is violated in order to bring Mr. Delvile, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Hobson, and Mr. Albany into a room together. But when we have them there, we soon forget probability in the exquisitely ludicrous effect which is produced by the conflict of four old fools, each raging with a monomania of his own, each talking a dialect of his own, and each inflaming all the others anew every time he opens his mouth."—*Macaulay's Essay on Mme. D'Arblay.*

good day. Your humble servant, ma'am, and I hope, sir," to Mr. Briggs, "you won't begin bad words again!"

"No, no," said Briggs, "ready to make up; all at an end; only don't much like *Spain*, that's all!" winking significantly, "nor a'n't over fond of a *skeleton!*"

Mr. Hobson now retired; and Mr. Delvile and Mr. Briggs, being both wearied and both in haste to have done, settled in about five minutes all for which they met, after passing more than an hour in agreeing what that was.

Mr. Briggs then, saying he had an engagement upon business, declined settling his own accounts till another time, but promised to see Cecilia again soon, and added, "be sure take care of that old Mr. Bounce! cracked in the noddle; see that with half an eye! better not trust him! break out some day: do you a mischief!"

He then went away: but while the parlour-door was still open, to the no little surprise of Cecilia, the servant announced Mr. Belfield. He hardly entered the room, and his countenance spoke haste and eagerness. "I have this moment, madam," he said, "been informed a complaint has been lodged against me here, and I could not rest till I had the honour of assuring you, that though I have been rather dilatory, I have not neglected my appointment, nor has the condescension of your interference been thrown away."

He then bowed, shut the door, and ran off. Cecilia, though happy to understand by this speech that her's was actually restored to his family, was sorry at these repeated intrusions in the presence of Mr. Delvile, who was now the only one that remained.

She expected every instant that he would ring for his chair, which he kept in waiting; but, after a pause of some continuance, to her equal surprise and disturbance, he made the following speech. "As it is probable I am now for the last time alone with you, ma'am, and as it is certain we shall meet no more upon business, I cannot, in justice to my own character, and to the respect I retain for the memory of the Dean, your uncle, take a final leave of the office with which he was pleased to invest me, without first fulfilling my own ideas of the duty it requires from me, by giving you some counsel relating to your future establishment."

This was not a preface much to enliven Cecilia; it prepared her for such speeches as she was least willing to hear, and gave to her the mixt and painful sensation of spirits depressed, with pride alarmed.

"My numerous engagements," he continued, "and the appropriation of my time, already settled, to their various claims, must make me brief in what I have to represent, and somewhat, perhaps, abrupt in coming to the purpose. But that you will excuse."

Cecilia disdained to humour this arrogance by any compliments or concessions: she was silent, therefore; and when they were both seated, he went on.

"You are now at a time of life when it is natural for young women to wish for some connection: and the largeness of your fortune will remove from you such difficulties as prove bars to the pretensions, in this expensive age, of those who possess not such advantages. It would have been some pleasure to me, while I yet considered you as my ward, to have seen you properly disposed of: but as that time is past, I can only give you some general advice, which you may follow or neglect as you think fit. By giving it, I shall satisfy myself; for the rest, I am not responsible."

He paused; but Cecilia felt less and less inclination to make use of the opportunity by speaking in her turn.

"Yet though, as I just now hinted, young women of large fortunes may have little trouble in finding themselves establishments, they ought not, therefore, to trifle when proper ones are in their power, nor to suppose themselves equal to any they may chance to desire."

Cecilia coloured high at this pointed reprehension; but feeling her disgust every moment encrease, determined to sustain herself with dignity, and at least not to suffer him to perceive the triumph of his ostentation and rudeness.

"The proposals," he continued, "of the Earl of Ernolf had always my approbation; it was certainly an ill-judged thing to neglect such an opportunity of being honourably settled. The clause of the name was, to *him*, immaterial; since his own name half a century ago was unheard of, and since he is himself only known by his title. He is still,

however, I have authority to acquaint you, perfectly well disposed to renew his application to you."

"I am sorry, sir," said Cecilia, coldly, "to hear it."

"You have, perhaps, some other better offer in view?"

"No, sir," cried she, with spirit, "nor even in desire."

"Am I, then, to infer that some inferior offer has more chance of your approbation?"

"There is no reason, sir, to infer any thing; I am content with my actual situation, and have, at present, neither prospect nor intention of changing it."

"I perceive, but without surprise, your unwillingness to discuss the subject; nor do I mean to press it: I shall merely offer to your consideration one caution, and then relieve you from my presence. Young women of ample fortunes, who are early independent, are sometimes apt to presume they may do everything with impunity; but they are mistaken; they are as liable to censure as those who are wholly unprovided for."

"I hope, sir," said Cecilia, staring, "this at least is a caution rather drawn from my situation than my behaviour?"

"I mean not, ma'am, narrowly to go into, or investigate the subject; what I have said you may make your own use of; I have only to observe further, that when young women, at your time of life, are at all negligent of so nice a thing as reputation, they commonly live to repent it."

He then arose to go, but Cecilia, not more offended than amazed, said, "I must beg, sir, you will explain yourself!"

"Certainly this matter," he answered, "must be immaterial to *me:* yet, as I have once been your guardian by the nomination of the Dean, your uncle, I cannot forbear making an effort towards preventing any indiscretion: and frequent visits to a young man——"

"Good God! sir," interrupted Cecilia, "what is it you mean?"

"It can certainly, as I said before, be nothing to *me*, though I should be glad to see you in better hands: but I cannot suppose you have been led to take such steps without some serious plan; and I would advise you, without loss of time, to think better of what you are about."

"Should I think, sir, to eternity," cried Cecilia, "I could never conjecture what you mean!"

"You may not choose," said he, proudly, "to understand me; but I have done. If it had been in my power to have interfered in your service with my Lord Derford, notwithstanding my reluctance to being involved in any fresh employment, I should have made a point of not refusing it: but this young man is nobody,—a very imprudent connection—"

"What young man, sir?"

"Nay, *I* know nothing of him! it is by no means likely I should: but, as I had already been informed of your attention to him, the corroborating incidents of my servant's following you to his house, his friend's seeking him at yours, and his own waiting upon you this morning; were not well calculated to make me withdraw my credence to it."

"Is it, then, Mr. Belfield, sir, concerning whom you draw these inferences, from circumstances the most accidental and unmeaning?"

"It is by no means my practice," cried he, haughtily, and with evident marks of high displeasure at this speech, "to believe anything lightly, or without even unquestionable authority; what once, therefore, I have credited, I do not often find erroneous. Mistake not, however, what I have said into supposing I have any objection to your marrying; on the contrary, it had been for the honour of my family had you been married a year ago: I should not then have suffered the degradation of seeing a son of the first expectations in the kingdom upon the point of renouncing his birth, nor a woman of the first distinction ruined in her health, and broken for ever in her constitution."

The emotions of Cecilia at this speech were too powerful for concealment; her colour varied, now reddening with indignation, now turning pale with apprehension; she arose, she trembled, and sat down; she arose again, but not knowing what to say, or what to do, again sat down.

Mr. Delvile then, making a stiff bow, wished her good morning.

"Go not so, sir!" cried she, in faltering accents; "let

me at least convince you of the mistake with regard to Mr. Belfield—"

"My mistakes, ma'am," said he, with a contemptuous smile, "are perhaps not easily convicted, and I may possibly labour under others that would give you no less trouble; it may, therefore, be better to avoid any further disquisition."

"No, not better," answered she, again recovering her courage from this fresh provocation; "I fear no disquisition; on the contrary, it is my interest to solicit one."

"This intrepidity in a young woman," said he, ironically, "is certainly very commendable; and doubtless, as you are your own mistress, your having run out great part of your fortune, is nothing beyond what you have a right to do."

"Me!" cried Cecilia, astonished, "run out great part of my fortune!"

"Perhaps that is another *mistake!* I have not often been so unfortunate; and you are not, then, in debt?"

"In debt, sir?"

"Nay, I have no intention to enquire into your affairs. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"I beg, I entreat, sir, that you will stop!—make me, at least understand what you mean, whether you deign to hear my justification or not."

"O, I am mistaken, it seems! misinformed, deceived; and you have neither spent more than you have received, nor taken up money of Jews? your minority has been clear of debts? and your fortune, now you are of age, will be free from incumbrances?"

Cecilia, who now began to understand him, eagerly answered, "do you mean, sir, the money which I took up last spring?"

"O, no; by no means, I conceive the whole to be a *mistake!*"

And he went to the door.

"Hear me but a moment, sir!" cried she, hastily, following him; "since you know of that transaction, do not refuse to listen to its occasion? I took up the money for Mr. Harrel; it was all, and solely for him."

"For Mr. Harrel, was it?" said he, with an air of

supercilious incredulity; "that was rather an unlucky step. Your servant, ma'am."

And he opened the door.

"You will not hear me, then? you will not credit me?" cried she in the cruelest agitation.

"Some other time, ma'am; at present my avocations are too numerous to permit me."

And again, stiffly bowing, he called to his servants, who were waiting in the hall, and put himself into his chair.

CHAPTER II.

A SUSPICION.

CECILIA was now left in a state of perturbation that was hardly to be endured. The contempt with which she had been treated during the whole visit was nothing short of insult, but the accusations with which it was concluded did not more irritate than astonish her.

That some strange prejudice had been taken against her, even more than belonged to her connection with young Delvile, the message brought her by Dr. Lyster had given her reason to suppose: what that prejudice was, she now knew, though how excited she was still ignorant; but she found Mr. Delvile had been informed she had taken up money of a Jew, without having heard it was for Mr. Harrel, and that he had been acquainted with her visits in Portland-street, without seeming to know Mr. Belfield had a sister. Two charges such as these, so serious in their nature, and so destructive of her character, filled her with horror and consternation, and even somewhat served to palliate his illiberal and injurious behaviour.

But how reports thus false and thus disgraceful should be raised, and by what dark work of slander and malignity they had been spread, remained a doubt inexplicable. They could not, she was certain, be the mere rumour of chance, since in both the assertions there was some foundation of truth, however cruelly perverted, or basely over-charged.

This led her to consider how few people there were not

only who had interest, but who had power to propagate such calumnies; even her acquaintance with the Belfields she remembered not ever mentioning, for she knew none of their friends, and none of her own knew them. How, then, should it be circulated, that she "visited often at the house"? how ever be invented that it was from her "attention to the young man"? Henrietta, she was sure, was too good and too innocent to be guilty of such perfidy; and the young man himself had always shown a modesty and propriety that manifested his total freedom from the vanity of such a suspicion, and an elevation of sentiment that would have taught him to scorn the boast, even if he believed the partiality.

The mother, however, had neither been so modest nor so rational; she had openly avowed her opinion that Cecilia was in love with her son; and as that son, by never offering himself, had never been refused, her opinion had received no check of sufficient force for a mind so gross and literal to change it.

This part, therefore, of the charge she gave to Mrs. Belfield, whose officious and loquacious forwardness she concluded had induced her to narrate her suspicions, till, step by step, they had reached Mr. Delvile.

But though able, by the probability of this conjecture, to account for the report concerning Belfield, the whole affair of the debt remained a difficulty not to be solved. Mr. Harrel, his wife, Mr. Arnott, the Jew and Mr. Monckton, were the only persons to whom the transaction was known; and though from five a secret, in the course of so many months, might easily be supposed likely to transpire, those five were so particularly bound to silence, not only for her interest but their own, that it was not unreasonable to believe it as safe among them all, as if solely consigned to one. For herself, she had revealed it to no creature but Mr. Monckton; not even to Delvile; though, upon her consenting to marry him, he had an undoubted right to be acquainted with the true state of her affairs; but such had been the hurry, distress, confusion and irresolution of her mind at that period, that this whole circumstance had been driven from it entirely, and she had, since, frequently blamed herself for such want of recollection. Mr. Harrel,

for a thousand reasons, she was certain had never named it; and had the communication come from his widow or from Mr. Arnott, the motives would have been related as well as the debt, and she had been spared the reproach of contracting it for purposes of her own extravagance. The Jew, indeed, was, to her, under no obligation of secrecy, but he had an obligation far more binding,—he was tied to himself.

A suspicion now arose in her mind which made it thrill with horror; "Good God!" she exclaimed, "can Mr. Monckton—"

She stopt, even to herself;—she checked the idea;—she drove it hastily from her;—she was certain it was false and cruel;—she hated herself for having started it.

"No," cried she, "he is my friend, the confirmed friend of many years, my well-wisher from childhood, my zealous counsellor and assistant almost from my birth to this hour:—such perfidy from him would not even be human!"

Yet still her perplexity was undiminished; the affair was undoubtedly known, and it only could be known by the treachery of some one entrusted with it; and however earnestly her generosity combated her rising suspicions, she could not wholly quell them; and Mr. Monckton's strange aversion to the Delvile's, his earnestness to break off her connection with them, occurred to her remembrance, and haunted her perforce with surmises to his disadvantage.

That gentleman, when he came home, found her in this comfortless and fluctuating state, endeavouring to form conjectures upon what had happened, yet unable to succeed, but by suggestions which one moment excited her abhorrence of him, and the next of herself.

He enquired, with his usual appearance of easy friendliness, into what had passed with her two guardians, and how she had settled her affairs. She answered without hesitation all his questions, but her manner was cold and reserved, though her communication was frank.

This was not unheeded by Mr. Monckton, who, after a short time, begged to know if anything had disturbed her.

Cecilia, ashamed of her doubts, though unable to get rid of them, then endeavoured to brighten up, and changed the

subject to the difficulties she had had to encounter from the obstinacy of Mr. Briggs.

Mr. Monckton for awhile humoured this evasion; but when, by her own exertion, her solemnity began to wear off, he repeated his interrogatory, and would not be satisfied without an answer.

Cecilia, earnest that surmises so injurious should be removed, then honestly, but without comments, related the scene which had just past between Mr. Delvile and herself.

No comments were, however, wanting to explain to Mr. Monckton the change of her behaviour: "I see," he cried, hastily, "what you cannot but suspect; and I will go myself to Mr. Delvile, and insist upon his clearing me."

Cecilia, shocked to have thus betrayed what was passing within her, assured him his vindication required not such a step, and begged he would counsel her how to discover this treachery, without drawing from her concern at it a conclusion so offensive to himself.

He was evidently, however, and greatly disturbed; he declared his own wonder equal to her's how the affair had been betrayed, expressed the warmest indignation at the malevolent insinuations against her conduct, and lamented with mingled acrimony and grief, that there should exist even the possibility of casting the odium of such villainy upon himself.

Cecilia, distressed, perplexed, and ashamed at once, again endeavoured to appease him, and though a lurking doubt obstinately clung to her understanding, the purity of her own principles, and the softness of her heart, pleaded strongly for his innocence, and urged her to detest her suspicion, though to conquer it they were unequal.

"It is true," said he, with an air ingenuous though mortified, "I dislike the Delviles, and have always disliked them; they appear to me a jealous, vindictive, and insolent race, and I should have thought I betrayed the faithful regard I professed for you, had I concealed my opinion when I saw you in danger of forming an alliance with them; I spoke to you, therefore, with honest zeal, thoughtless of any enmity I might draw upon myself; but though it was an interference from which I hoped, by preventing the connection, to contribute to your happiness, it was not

with a design to stop it at the expense of your character,—a design black, horrible and diabolical! a design which must be formed by a dæmon, but which even a dæmon could never, I think, execute!"

The candour of this speech, in which his aversion to the Delviles was openly acknowledged, and rationally justified, somewhat quieted the suspicions of Cecilia, which far more anxiously sought to be confuted than confirmed: she began, therefore, to conclude that some accident, inexplicable as unfortunate, had occasioned the partial discovery to Mr. Delvile, by which her own goodness proved the source of her defamation: and though something still hung upon her mind that destroyed that firm confidence she had hitherto felt in the friendship of Mr. Monckton, she held it utterly unjust to condemn him without proof, which she was not more unable to procure, than to satisfy herself with any reason why so perfidiously he should calumniate her.

Comfortless, however, and tormented with conjectures equally vague and afflicting, she could only clear him to be lost in perplexity, she could only accuse him to be penetrated with horror. She endeavoured to suspend her judgment till time should develope the mystery, and only for the present sought to finish her business and leave London.

She renewed, therefore, again, the subject of Mr. Briggs, and told him how vain had been her effort to settle with him. Mr. Monckton instantly offered his services in assisting her, and the next morning they went together to his house, where, after an obstinate battle, they gained a complete victory: Mr. Briggs gave up all his accounts, and, in a few days, by the active interference of Mr. Monckton, her affairs were wholly taken out of his hands. He stormed, and prophesied all ill to Cecilia, but it was not to any purpose; he was so disagreeable to her, by his manners, and so unintelligible to her in matters of business, that she was happy to have done with him; even though, upon inspecting his accounts, they were all found clear and exact, and his desire to retain his power over her fortune, proved to have no other motive than a love of money so potent, that to manage it, even for another, gave him a satisfaction he knew not how to relinquish.

Mr. Monckton, who, though a man of pleasure, understood business perfectly well, now instructed and directed her in making a general arrangement of her affairs. The estate which devolved to her from her uncle, and which was all in landed property, she continued to commit to the management of the steward who was employed in his lifetime; and her own fortune from her father, which was all in the stocks, she now diminished to nothing by selling out to pay Mr. Monckton the principal and interest which she owed him, and by settling with her bookseller.

While these matters were transacting, which, notwithstanding her eagerness to leave town, could not be brought into such a train as to permit her absence in less than a week, she passed her time chiefly alone. Her wishes all inclined her to bestow it upon Henrietta, but the late attack of Mr. Delvile had frightened her from keeping up that connection, since however carefully she might confine it to the daughter, Mrs. Belfield, she was certain, would impute it all to the son.

That attack rested upon her mind, in defiance of all her endeavours to banish it; the contempt with which it was made seemed intentionally offensive, as if he had been happy to derive from her supposed ill conduct, a right to triumph over as well as reject her. She concluded, also, that Delvile would be informed of these calumnies, yet she judged his generosity by her own, and was therefore convinced he would not credit them: but what chiefly at this time encreased her sadness and uneasiness, was the mention of Mrs. Delvile's broken constitution and ruined health. She had always preserved for that lady the most affectionate respect, and could not consider herself as the cause of her sufferings, without feeling the utmost concern, however conscious she had not wilfully occasioned them.

Nor was this scene the only one by which her efforts to forget this family were defeated; her watchful monitor, Albany, failed not again to claim her promise; and though Mr. Monckton earnestly exhorted her not to trust herself out with him, she preferred a little risk to the keenness of his reproaches, and the weather being good on the morning that he called, she consented to accompany him in his rambles, only charging her footman to follow where-ever

they went, and not to fail enquiring for her if she stayed long out of his sight. These precautions were rather taken to satisfy Mr. Monckton than herself, who, having now procured intelligence of the former disorder of his intellects, was fearful of some extravagance, and apprehensive for her safety.

He took her to a miserable house in a court leading into Piccadilly, where, up three pair of stairs, was a wretched woman ill in bed, while a large family of children were playing in the room.

"See here," cried he, "what human nature can endure! look at that poor wretch, distracted with torture, yet lying in all this noise! unable to stir in her bed, yet without any assistant! suffering the pangs of acute disease, yet wanting the necessaries of life!"

Cecilia went up to the bed-side, and enquired more particularly into the situation of the invalid; but finding she could hardly speak from pain, she sent for the woman of the house, who kept a green-grocer's shop on the ground floor, and desired her to hire a nurse for her sick lodger, to call all the children down stairs, and to send for an apothecary, whose bill she promised to pay. She then gave her some money to get what necessaries might be wanted, and said she would come again in two days to see how they went on.

Albany, who listened to these directions with silent, yet eager attention, now clasped both his hands with a look of rapture, and exclaimed, "Virtue yet lives,—and I have found her!"

Cecilia, proud of such praise, and ambitious to deserve it, cheerfully said, "where, sir, shall we go now?"

"Home;" answered he with an aspect the most benign; "I will not wear out thy pity by rendering woe familiar to it."

Cecilia, though at this moment more disposed for acts of charity than for business or for pleasure, remembered that her fortune however large was not unlimited, and would not press any further bounty for objects she knew not, certain that occasions and claimants, far beyond her ability of answering, would but too frequently arise among those with whom she was more connected, she therefore yielded to his direction, and returned to Soho-square.

Again, however, he failed not to call at the time she had

appointed for re-visiting the invalid, to whom, with much gladness, he conducted her.

The poor woman, whose disease was a rheumatic fever, was already much better; she had been attended by an apothecary who had given her some alleviating medicine; she had a nurse at her bed-side, and, the room being cleared of the children, she had had the refreshment of some sleep.

She was now able to raise her head and make her acknowledgments to her benefactress; but not a little was the surprise of Cecilia, when, upon looking in her face, she said, "Ah, madam, I have seen you before!"

Cecilia, who had not the smallest recollection of her, in return desired to know when, or where?

"When you were going to be married, madam, I was the pew-opener at ———— church."

Cecilia started with secret horror, and involuntarily retreated from the bed; while Albany with a look of astonishment exclaimed, "Married?—why, then, is it unknown?"

"Ask me not!" cried she, hastily; "it is all a mistake."

"Poor thing!" cried he, "this, then, is the string thy nerves endure not to have touched! sooner will I expire than a breath of mine shall make it vibrate! O, sacred be thy sorrow, for thou canst melt at that of the indigent!"

Cecilia then made a few general enquiries, and heard that the poor woman, who was a widow, had been obliged to give up her office, from the frequent attacks which she suffered of the rheumatism; that she had received much assistance both from the Rector and the Curate of —— church, but her continual illness, with the largeness of her family, kept her distressed in spite of all help.

Cecilia promised to consider what she could do for her, and then, giving her more money, returned to Lady Margaret's.

Albany, who found that the unfortunate recollection of the pew-opener had awakened in his young pupil a melancholy train of reflections, seemed now to compassionate the sadness which hitherto he had reproved, and walking silently by her side till she came to Soho-square, said in accents of kindness, "Peace light upon thy head, and dissipate thy woes!" and left her.

"Ah, when!" cried she to herself, "if thus they are to be revived for-ever?"

Mr. Monckton, who observed that something had greatly affected her, now expostulated warmly against Albany and his wild schemes; "You trifle with your own happiness," he cried, "by witnessing these scenes of distress, and you will trifle away your fortune upon projects you can never fulfil: the very air in those miserable houses is unwholesome for you to breathe; you will soon be infected with some of the diseases to which you so incautiously expose yourself, and while not half you give in charity will answer the purpose you wish, you will be plundered by cheats and sharpers till you have nothing left to bestow. You must be more considerate for yourself, and not thus governed by Albany, whose insanity is but partially cured, and whose projects are so boundless, that the whole capital of the East India Company would not suffice to fulfil them."

Cecilia, though she liked not the severity of this remonstrance, acknowledged there was some truth in it, and promised to be discreet, and take the reins into her own hands.

There remained for her, however, no other satisfaction; and the path which had thus been pointed out to her, grew more and more alluring every step. Her old friends, the poor Hills, now occurred to her memory, and she determined to see herself in what manner they went on.

The scene which this enquiry presented to her, was by no means calculated to strengthen Mr. Monckton's doctrine, for the prosperity in which she found this little family amply rewarded the liberality she had shown to it, and proved an irresistible encouragement to similar actions. Mrs. Hill wept for joy in recounting how well she succeeded, and Cecilia, delighted by the power of giving such pleasure, forgot all cautions and promises in the generosity which she displayed. She paid Mrs. Roberts the arrears that were due to her, she discharged all that was owing for the children who had been put to school, desired they might still be sent to it solely at her expense, and gave the mother a sum of money to be laid out in presents for them all.

To perform her promise with the pew-opener was however more difficult; her ill health, and the extreme youth of her children making her utterly helpless: but these were not considerations for Cecilia to desert her, but rather motives for regarding her as more peculiarly an object of

charity. She found she had once been a clear-starcher, and was a tolerable plain work-woman; she resolved, therefore, to send her into the country, where she hoped to be able to get her some business, and knew that at least she could help her, if unsuccessful, and see that her children were brought up to useful employments. The woman herself was enchanted at the plan, and firmly persuaded the country air would restore her health. Cecilia told her only to wait till she was well enough to travel, and promised, in the meantime, to look out some little habitation for her. She then gave her money to pay her bills, and for her journey, and writing a full direction where she would hear of her at Bury, took leave of her till that time.

These magnificent donations and designs, being communicated to Albany, seemed a renovation to him of youth, spirit, and joy! while their effect upon Mr. Monckton resembled an annihilation of all three! to see money thus sported away, which he had long considered as his own, to behold those sums which he had destined for his pleasures, thus lavishly bestowed upon beggars, excited a rage he could with difficulty conceal, and an uneasiness he could hardly endure; and he languished, he sickened for the time when he might put a period to such romantic proceedings.

Such were the only occupations which interrupted the solitude of Cecilia, except those which were given to her by actual business; and the moment her affairs were in so much forwardness that they could be managed by letters, she prepared for returning into the country. She acquainted Lady Margaret and Mr. Monckton with her design, and gave orders to her servants to be ready to set off the next day.

Mr. Monckton made not any opposition, and refused himself the satisfaction of accompanying her: and Lady Margaret, whose purpose was now answered, and who wished to be in the country herself, determined to follow her.

CHAPTER III.

A DISTURBANCE.

THIS matter being settled at breakfast, Cecilia, having but one day more to spend in London, knew not how to let it pass without taking leave of Henrietta, though she chose not again to expose herself to the forward insinuations of her mother; she sent her, therefore, a short note, begging to see her at Lady Margaret's, and acquainting her that the next day she was going out of town.

Henrietta returned the following answer.

To Miss Beverley.

Madam,

My mother is gone to market, and I must not go out without her leave; I have run to the door at every knock this whole week in hopes you were coming, and my heart has jumpt at every coach that has gone through the street. Dearest lady, why did you tell me you would come? I should not have thought of such a great honour if you had not put it in my head. And now I have got the use of a room where I can often be alone for two or three hours together. And so I shall this morning, if it was possible my dear Miss Beverley could come. But I don't mean to be teasing, and I would not be impertinent or encroaching for the world; but only the thing is, I have a great deal to say to you, and if you was not so rich a lady, and so much above me, I am sure I should love you better than anybody in the whole world, almost; and now I dare say I shan't see you at all; for it rains very hard, and my mother, I know, will be sadly angry if I ask to go in a coach. O dear! I don't know what I can do! for it will half break my heart, if my dear Miss Beverley should go out of town, and I not see her!

I am, Madam,

With the greatest respectfulness,

Your most humble servant,

Henrietta Belfield.

This artless remonstrance, joined to the intelligence that she could see her alone, made Cecilia instantly order a chair, and go herself to Portland-street: for she found by this letter there was much doubt if she could otherwise see her, and the earnestness of Henrietta made her now not endure to disappoint her. "She has much," cried she, "to say to me, and I will no longer refuse to hear her; she shall unbosom to me her gentle heart, for we have now nothing to fear from each other. She promises herself pleasure from the communication, and doubtless it must be some relief to her. Oh, were there any friendly bosom, in which I might myself confide!—happier Henrietta! less fearful of thy pride, less tenacious of thy dignity! thy sorrows at least seek the consolation of sympathy,—mine, alas! fettered by prudence, must fly it!"

She was shown into the parlour, which she had the pleasure to find empty; and, in an instant, the warm-hearted Henrietta was in her arms. "This is sweet of you indeed," cried she, "for I did not know how to ask it, though it rains so hard I could not have walked to you, and I don't know what I should have done, if you had gone away and quite forgot me."

She then took her into the back parlour, which she said they had lately hired, and, as it was made but little use of, she had it almost entirely to herself.

There had passed a sad scene, she told her, at the meeting with her brother, though now they were a little more comfortable; yet her mother, she was sure, would never be at rest till he got into some higher way of life; "And, indeed, I have some hopes," she continued, "that we shall be able by and by to do something better for him; for he has got one friend in the world yet, thank God, and such a noble friend!—indeed I believe he can do whatever he pleases for him,—that is, I mean, I believe if he was to ask any thing for him, there's nobody would deny him. And this is what I wanted to talk to you about."—

Cecilia, who doubted not but she meant Delvile, scarce knew how to press the subject, though she came with no other view: Henrietta, however, too eager to want solicitation, went on.

"But the question is whether we shall be able to prevail

upon my brother to accept anything, for he grows more and more unwilling to be obliged, and the reason is, that, being poor, he is afraid, I believe, people should think he wants to beg of them: though if they knew him as well as I do, they would not long think that, for I am sure he would a great deal rather be starved to death. But indeed, to say the truth, I am afraid he has been sadly to blame in this affair, and quarrelled when there was no need to be affronted; for I have seen a gentleman who knows a great deal better than my brother what people should do, and he says he took everything wrong that was done, all the time he was at Lord Vannelt's."

"And how does this gentleman know it?"

"O, because he went himself to enquire about it; for he knows Lord Vannelt very well, and it was by his means my brother came acquainted with him. And this gentleman would not have wished my brother to be used ill any more than I should myself, so I am sure I may believe what he says. But my poor brother, not being a lord himself, thought everybody meant to be rude to him, and because he knew he was poor, he suspected they all behaved disrespectfully to him. But this gentleman gave me his word that everybody liked him and esteemed him, and if he would not have been so suspicious, they would all have done anything for him in the world."

"You know this gentleman very well, then?"

"O, no, madam!" she answered, hastily, "I don't know him at all! he only comes here to see my brother; it would be very impertinent for me to call him an acquaintance of mine."

"Was it before your brother, then, he held this conversation with you?"

"O, no, my brother would have been affronted with him, too, if he had! But he called here to enquire for him at the time when he was lost to us, and my mother quite went down upon her knees to him to beg him to go to Lord Vannelt's, and make excuses for him, if he had not behaved properly: but if my brother was to know this, he would hardly speak to her again! So when this gentleman came next, I begged him not to mention it, for my mother happened to be out, and so I saw him alone."

"And did he stay with you long?"

"No, ma'am, a very short time indeed; but I asked him questions all the while, and kept him as long as I could, that I might hear all he had to say about my brother."

"Have you never seen him since?"

"No, ma'am, not once! I suppose he does not know my brother is come back to us. Perhaps, when he does, he will call."

"Do you wish him to call?"

"Me?" cried she, blushing, "a little;—sometimes I do;—for my brother's sake."

"For your brother's sake! Ah, my dear Henrietta!—but tell me,—or *don't* tell me, if you had rather not,—did I not once see you kissing a letter? perhaps it was from this same noble friend?"

"It was not a letter, madam," said she, looking down, "it was only the cover of one to my brother."

"The cover of a letter only!—and that to your brother!—is it possible you could so much value it?"

"Ah, madam! *You*, who are always used to the good and the wise, who see no other sort of people but those in high life, *you* can have no notion how they strike those that they are new to!—but I who see them seldom, and who live with people so very unlike them—Oh, you cannot guess how sweet to *me* is everything that belongs to them! whatever has but once been touched by their hands I should like to lock up, and keep for ever! though if I was used to them, as you are, perhaps I might think less of them."

"Alas!" thought Cecilia, who by *them* knew she only meant *him*, "little indeed would further intimacy protect you!"

"We are all over-ready," continued Henrietta, "to blame others, and that is the way I have been doing all this time myself; but I don't blame my poor brother now for living so with the great, as I used to do, for, now I have seen a little more of the world, I don't wonder any longer at his behaviour: for I know how it is, and I see that those who have had good educations, and kept great company, and mixed with the world,—O, it is another thing!—they seem quite a different species!—they are so gentle, so soft-mannered! nothing comes from them but what is meant

to oblige! they seem as if they only lived to give pleasure to other people, and as if they never thought at all of themselves!"

"Ah, Henrietta!" said Cecilia, shaking her head, "you have caught the enthusiasm of your brother, though you so long condemned it! Oh, have a care, lest, like him also, you find it as pernicious as it is alluring!"

"There is no danger for *me*, madam," answered she, "for the people I so much admire are quite out of my reach. I hardly ever even see them; and perhaps it may so happen I may see them no more!"

"The people?" said Cecilia, smiling, "are there, then, many you so much distinguish?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" cried she, eagerly, "there is only one! there *can* be—I mean there are only a few—" she checked herself, and stopt.[1]

"Whoever you admire," cried Cecilia, "your admiration cannot but honour: yet indulge it not too far, lest it should wander from your heart to your peace, and make you wretched for life."

"Ah, madam!—I see you know who is the particular person I was thinking of! but indeed you are quite mistaken if you suppose any thing bad of me!"

"Bad of you!" cried Cecilia, embracing her, "I scarce think so well of anyone!"

"But I mean, madam, if you think I forget he is so much above me. But indeed I never do; for I only admire him for his goodness to my brother, and never think of him at all, but just by way of comparing him, sometimes, to the other people that I see, because he makes me hate them so, that I wish I was never to see them again."

"His acquaintance, then," said Cecilia, "has done you but an ill office, and happy it would be for you, could you forget you had ever made it."

[1] "But, poor Henrietta! Some harm will come to her, I see, and break my heart, for she has won it strangely; her innocent love of a character superior in rank and fortune to herself, shews her taste and proves her merit; while the delicacy of her mind, the diffidence arising from—I am just ready to order the coach, in short, and fetch her away to Streatham, from that most inimitably painted mother, whom Queeny does so detest."—*Mrs. Thrale to Miss Burney*, 1782. *Diary*, p. 139, vol. ii.

"O, I shall never do that! for the more I think of him, the more I am out of humour with everybody else! O, Miss Beverley! we have a sad acquaintance indeed! I'm sure I don't wonder my brother was so ashamed of them. They are all so rude, and so free, and put one so out of countenance.—O, how different is this person you are thinking of! He would not distress anybody, or make one ashamed for all the world! *You* only are like him! always gentle, always obliging!——Sometimes I think you must be his sister—once, too, I heard—but that was contradicted."

A deep sigh escaped Cecilia, at this speech; she guessed too well what she might have heard, and she knew too well how it might be contradicted.

"Surely, *you* cannot be unhappy, Miss Beverley!" said Henrietta, with a look of mingled surprise and concern.

"I have much, I own," cried Cecilia, assuming more cheerfulness, "to be thankful for, and I endeavour not to forget it."

"O, how often do I think," cried Henrietta, "that you, madam, are the happiest person in the world! with everything at your own disposal—with everybody in love with you, with all the money that you can wish for, and so much sweetness that nobody can envy you it! with power to keep just what company you please, and everybody proud to be one of the number!—O, if I could choose who I would be, I should sooner say Miss Beverley than any princess in the world!"

"Ah," thought Cecilia, "if such is my situation—how cruel that by one dreadful blow all its happiness should be thrown away!"

"Were I a rich lady, like you," continued Henrietta, "and quite in my own power, then, indeed, I might soon think of nothing but those people that I admire! and that makes me often wonder that *you*, madam, who are just such another as himself——but then, indeed, you may see so many of the same sort, that just this one may not so much strike you; and for that reason I hope with all my heart that he will never be married as long as he lives, for as he must take some lady in just such high life as his own, I should always be afraid that she would never love him as she ought to do!"

"He need not now be single," thought Cecilia, "were that all he had cause to apprehend!"

"I often think," added Henrietta, "that the rich would be as much happier for marrying the poor, as the poor for marrying the rich, for then they would take somebody that would try to deserve their kindness, and now they only take those that know they have a right to it. Often and often have I thought so about this very gentleman! and sometimes when I have been in his company, and seen his civility and his sweetness, I have fancied I was rich and grand myself, and it has quite gone out of my head that I was nothing but poor Henrietta Belfield!"

"Did he, then," cried Cecilia a little alarmed, "ever seek to ingratiate himself into your favour?"

"No, never! but when treated with so much softness, 'tis hard always to remember ones meanness! You, madam, have no notion of that task: no more had I myself till lately, for I cared not who was high, nor who was low; but now, indeed, I must own I have sometimes wished myself richer! yet he assumes so little, that at other times, I have almost forgot all distance between us, and even thought ——Oh, foolish thought!——"

"Tell it, sweet Henrietta, however!"

"I will tell you, madam, everything! for my heart has been bursting to open itself, and nobody have I dared trust. I have thought, then, I have sometimes thought, my true affection, my faithful fondness, my glad obedience,—might make him, if he did but know them, happier in me than in a greater lady!"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, extremely affected by this plaintive tenderness, "I believe it!—and were I him, I could not, I think, hesitate a moment in my choice!"

Henrietta, now, hearing her mother coming in, made a sign to her to be silent; but Mrs. Belfield had not been an instant in the passage, before a thundering knocking at the street-door occasioned it to be instantly re-opened. A servant then enquired if Mrs. Belfield was at home, and being answered by herself in the affirmative, a chair was brought into the house.

But what was the astonishment of Cecilia, when, in another moment, she heard from the next parlour the voice

of Mr. Delvile senior, saying, "Your servant, ma'am; Mrs. Belfield, I presume?"

There was no occasion, now, to make a sign to her of silence, for her own amazement was sufficient to deprive her of speech.

"Yes, sir," answered Mrs. Belfield; "but I suppose, sir, you are some gentleman to my son?"

"No, ma'am," he returned, "my business is with yourself."

Cecilia now recovering from her surprise, determined to hasten unnoticed out of the house, well knowing that to be seen in it would be regarded as a confirmation of all that he had asserted. She whispered, therefore, to Henrietta, that she must instantly run away, but upon softly opening the door leading to the passage, she found Mr. Delvile's chairmen, and a footman there in waiting.

She closed it again, irresolute what to do: but after a little deliberation, she concluded to out-stay him, as she was known to all his servants, who would not fail to mention seeing her; and a retreat so private was worse than any other risk. A chair was also in waiting for herself, but it was a hackney one, and she could not be known by it; and her footman she had fortunately dismissed, as he had business to transact for her journey next day.

Meanwhile the thinness of the partition between the two parlours made her hearing every word that was said unavoidable.

"I am sure, sir, I shall be very willing to oblige you," Mrs. Belfield answered; "but pray, sir, what's your name?"

"My name, ma'am," he replied, in a rather elevated voice, "I am seldom obliged to announce myself; nor is there any present necessity I should make it known. It is sufficient, I assure you, you are speaking to no very common person, and probably to one you will have little chance to meet with again."

"But how can I tell your business, sir, if I don't so much as know your name?"

"My business, ma'am, I mean to tell myself; your affair is only to hear it. I have some questions, indeed, to ask, which I must trouble you to answer, but they will sufficiently explain themselves to prevent any difficulty upon your part. There is no need, therefore, of any introductory ceremonial."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Belfield, wholly insensible of this ambiguous greatness, "if you mean to make your name a secret—"

"Few names, I believe, ma'am," cried he, haughtily, "have less the advantage of secrecy than mine! on the contrary, this is but one among a very few houses in this town to which my person would not immediately announce it. That, however, is immaterial; and you will be so good as to rest satisfied with my assurances, that the person with whom you are now conversing, will prove no disgrace to your character."

Mrs. Belfield, overpowered, though hardly knowing with what, only said *he was very welcome*, and begged him to sit down.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he answered, "my business is but of a moment, and my avocations are too many to suffer my infringing that time. You say you have a son; I have heard of him, also, somewhere, before; pray, will you give me leave to enquire——I don't mean to go deep into the matter,—but particular family occurrences make it essential for me to know,—whether there is not a young person of rather a capital fortune, to whom he is supposed to make proposals?"

"Lack-a-day, no, sir!" answered Mrs. Belfield, to the infinite relief of Cecilia, who instantly concluded this question referred to herself.

"I beg your pardon, then; good morning to you, ma'am," said Mr. Delvile, in a tone that spoke his disappointment; but added "And there is no such young person, you say, who favours his pretensions?"

"Dear sir," cried she, "why there's nobody he'll so much as put the question to! There's a young lady at this very time, a great fortune, that has as much a mind to him, I tell him, as any man need desire to see; but there's no making him think it! though he has been brought up at the university, and knows more about all the things, or as much, as anybody in the king's dominions."

"O, then," cried Mr. Delvile, in a voice of far more complacency, "it is not on the side of the young woman that the difficulty seems to rest?"

"Lord, no, sir! he might have had her again and again

only for asking! She came after him ever so often; but being brought up, as I said, at the university, he thought he knew better than me, and so my preaching was all as good as lost upon him."

The consternation of Cecilia at these speeches could by nothing be equalled but the shame of Henrietta, who, though she knew not to whom her mother made them, felt all the disgrace and the shock of them herself.

"I suppose, sir," continued Mrs. Belfield, "you know my son?"

"No, ma'am; my acquaintance is——not very universal."

"Then, sir, you are no judge how well he might make his own terms. And as to this young lady, she found him out, sir, when not one of his own natural friends could tell where in the world he was gone! She was the first, sir, to come and tell me news of him, though I was his own mother! Love, sir, is prodigious for quickness! it can see, I sometimes think, through bricks and mortar. Yet all this would not do, he was so obstinate not to take the hint!"

Cecilia now felt so extremely provoked, she was upon the point of bursting in upon them to make her own vindication; but as her passions, though they tried her reason never conquered it, she restrained herself, by considering that to issue forth from a room in that house, would do more towards strengthening what was thus boldly asserted, than all her protestations could have chance to destroy.

"And as to young ladies themselves," continued Mrs. Belfield, "they know no more how to make their minds known than a baby does: so I suppose he'll shilly-shally till somebody else will cry snap, and take her. It is but a little while ago that it was all the report she was to have young Mr. Delvile, one of her guardians' sons."

"I am sorry report was so impertinent," cried Mr. Delvile, with much displeasure; "young Mr. Delvile is not to be disposed of with so little ceremony; he knows better what is due to his family."

Cecilia here blushed from indignation, and Henrietta sighed from despondency.

"Lord, sir," answered Mrs. Belfield, "what should his

family do better? I never heard they were any so rich, and I dare say the old gentleman, being her guardian, took care to put his son enough in her way, however it came about that they did not make a match of it: for as to old Mr. Delvile, all the world says——"

"All the world takes a very great liberty," angrily interrupted Mr. Delvile, "in saying anything about him: and you will excuse my informing you that a person of his rank and consideration, is not lightly to be mentioned upon every little occasion that occurs."

"Lord, sir," cried Mrs. Belfield, somewhat surprised at this unexpected prohibition, "I don't care for my part if I never mention the old gentleman's name again! I never heard any good of him in my life, for they say he's as proud as Lucifer, and nobody knows what it's of, for they say—"

"*They* say?" cried he, firing with rage, "and who are *they?* be so good as inform me that?"

"Lord, everybody, sir! it's his common character."

"Then everybody is extremely indecent," speaking very loud, "to pay no more respect to one of the first families in England. It is a licentiousness that ought by no means to be suffered with impunity."

Here, the street-door being kept open by the servants in waiting, a new step was heard in the passage, which Henrietta immediately knowing, turned, with uplifted hands to Cecilia, and whispered, "How unlucky! it's my brother! I thought he would not have returned till night?"

"Surely he will not come in here?" re-whispered Cecilia.

But, at the same moment, he opened the door, and entered the room. He was immediately beginning an apology, and starting back, but Henrietta catching him by the arm, told him in a low voice, that she had made use of his room because she had thought him engaged for the day, but begged him to keep still and quiet, as the least noise would discover them.

Belfield then stopt; but the embarrassment of Cecilia was extreme; to find herself in his room after the speeches she had heard from his mother, and to continue with him in it by connivance, when she knew she had been represented as quite at his service, distressed and provoked her immea-

surably; and she felt very angry with Henrietta for not sooner informing her whose apartment she had borrowed. Yet now to remove, and to be seen, was not to be thought of; she kept, therefore, fixed to her seat, though changing colour every moment from the variety of her emotions.

During this painful interruption she lost Mrs. Belfield's next answer, and another speech or two from Mr. Delvile, to whose own passion and loudness was owing Belfield's entering his room unheard: but the next voice that called their attention was that of Mr. Hobson, who just then walked into the parlour.

"Why what's to do here?" cried he, facetiously, "nothing but chairs and livery servants! Why ma'am, what is this, your rout day? Sir, your most humble servant. I ask pardon, but I did not know you at first. But come, suppose we were all to sit down? Sitting's as cheap as standing, and what I say is this; when a man's tired, it's more agreeable."

"Have you any thing further, ma'am," said Mr. Delvile, with great solemnity, "to communicate to me?"

"No, sir," said Mrs. Belfield, rather angrily, "it's no business of mine to be communicating myself to a gentleman that I don't know the name of. Why, Mr. Hobson, how come you to know the gentleman?"

"To know *me!*" repeated Mr. Delvile, scornfully.

"Why I can't say much, ma'am," answered Mr. Hobson, "as to my knowing the gentleman, being I have been in his company but once; and what I say is, to know a person if one leaves but a quart in a hogshead, it's two pints too much. That's my notion. But, sir, that was but an ungain business at 'Squire Monckton's t'other morning. Everybody was no-how, as one may say. But, sir, if I may be so free, pray what is your private opinion of that old gentleman that talked so much out of the way?"

"My private opinion, sir?"

"Yes, sir; I mean if it's no secret; for as to a secret, I hold it's what no man has a right to enquire into, being of its own nature it's a thing not to be told. Now, as to what I think myself, my doctrine is this; I am quite of the old gentleman's mind about some things, and [illegible]ers I hold him to be quite wide of the mark. But as to talking

in such a whisky-frisky manner that nobody can understand him, why it's tantamount to not talking at all, being he might as well hold his tongue. That's what I say. And then as to that other article, of abusing a person for not giving away all his lawful gains to every cripple in the streets, just because he happens to have but one leg, or one eye, or some such matter, why it's knowing nothing of business! it's what I call talking at random."

"When you have finished, sir," said Mr. Delvile, "you will be so good to let me know."

"I don't mean to intrude, sir; that's not my way, so if you are upon business—"

"What else, sir, could you suppose brought me hither? However, I by no means purpose any discussion. I have only a few words more to say to this gentlewoman, and as my time is not wholly inconsequential, I should not be sorry to have an early opportunity of being heard."

"I shall leave you with the lady directly, sir, for I know business better than to interrupt it; but seeing chairs in the entry, my notion was I should see ladies in the parlour, not much thinking of gentlemen's going about in that manner, being I never did it myself. But I have nothing to offer against that; let every man have his own way; that's what *I* say. Only just let me ask the lady before I go, what's the meaning of my seeing two chairs in the entry, and only a person for one in the parlour? The gentleman, I suppose, did not come in *both*; ha! ha! ha!"

"Why, now you put me in mind," said Mrs. Belfield, "I saw a chair as soon as I come in; and I was just going to say who's here, when this gentleman's coming put it out of my head."

"Why, this is what I call hocus pocus work!" said Mr. Hobson; "but I shall make free to ask the chairmen who they are waiting for."

Mrs. Belfield, however, anticipated him; for running into the passage, she angrily called out, "What do you do here, Misters? do you only come to be out of the rain? I shall have no stand made of my entry, I can tell you!"

"Why, we are waiting for the lady," cried one of them.

"Waiting for a fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Belfield; "here's no lady here, nor no company; so if you think I'll have

my entry filled up by two hulking fellows for nothing, I shall show you the difference. One's dirt enough of one's own, without taking people out of the streets to help one. Who do you think's to clean after you?"

"That's no business of ours; the lady bid us wait," answered the man.

Cecilia, at this dispute, could with pleasure have cast herself out of the window to avoid being discovered; but all plan of escape was too late. Mrs. Belfield called aloud for her daughter, and then, returning to the front parlour, said, "I'll soon know if there's company come to my house without my knowing it!" and opened a door leading to the next room.

Cecilia, who had hitherto sat fixed to her chair, now hastily arose, but in a confusion too cruel for speech: Belfield, wondering even at his own situation, and equally concerned and surprised at her evident distress, had himself the feeling of a culprit, though without the least knowledge of any cause: and Henrietta, terrified at the prospect of her mother's anger, retreated as much as possible out of sight.

Such was the situation of the discovered, abashed, perplexed, and embarrassed! while that of the discoverers, far different, was bold, delighted, and triumphant!

"So!" cried Mrs. Belfield, "why here's Miss Beverley! —in my son's back room!" winking at Mr. Delvile.

"Why here's a lady, sure enough!" said Mr. Hobson, "and just where she should be, and that is with a gentleman, ha! ha! that's the right way, according to my notion! that's the true maxim for living agreeable."

"I came to see Miss Belfield," cried Cecilia, endeavouring, but vainly, to speak with composure, "and she brought me into this room."

"I am but this moment," cried Belfield, with eagerness, "returned home; and unfortunately broke into the room, from total ignorance of the honour which Miss Beverley did my sister."

These speeches, though both literally true, sounded, in the circumstances which brought them out, so much as mere excuses, that while Mr. Delvile haughtily marked his incredulity by a motion of his chin, Mrs. Belfield continued

winking at him most significantly, and Mr. Hobson, with still less ceremony, laughed aloud.

"I have nothing more, ma'am," said Mr. Delvile to Mrs. Belfield, "to enquire, for the few doubts with which I came to this house are now entirely satisfied. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"Give me leave, sir," said Cecilia, advancing with more spirit, "to explain, in presence of those who can best testify my veracity, the real circumstances—"

"I would by no means occasion you such unnecessary trouble, ma'am," answered he, with an air at once exulting and pompous, "the situation in which I see you abundantly satisfies my curiosity, and saves me from the apprehension I was under of being again convicted of a *mistake!*"

He then made her a stiff bow, and went to his chair.

Cecilia, colouring deeply at this contemptuous treatment, coldly took leave of Henrietta, and courtesying to Mrs. Belfield, hastened into the passage, to get into her own.

Henrietta was too much intimidated to speak, and Belfield was too delicate to follow her; Mr. Hobson only said, "The young lady seems quite dashed;" but Mrs. Belfield pursued her with entreaties she would stay.

She was too angry, however, to make any answer but by a distant bow of the head, and left the house with a resolution little short of a vow never again to enter it.

Her reflections upon this unfortunate visit were bitter beyond measure; the situation in which she had been surprised,—clandestinely concealed with only Belfield and his sister,—joined to the positive assertions of her partiality for him made by his mother, could not, to Mr. Delvile, but appear marks irrefragable that his charge in his former conversation was rather mild than overstrained, and that the connection he had mentioned, for whatever motives denied, was incontestably formed.

The apparent conviction of this part of the accusation, might also authorize, to one but too happy in believing ill of her, an implicit faith in that which regarded her having run out her fortune. His determination not to hear her showed the inflexibility of his character; and it was evident, notwithstanding his parading pretensions of wishing her welfare, that his inordinate pride was inflamed, at the

very supposition he could be mistaken or deceived for a moment.

Even Delvile himself, if gone abroad, might now hear this account with exaggerations that would baffle all his confidence: his mother, too, greatly as she esteemed and loved her, might have the matter so represented as to stagger her good opinion;—these were thoughts the most afflicting she could harbour, though their probability was such that to banish them was impossible.

To apply again to Mr. Delvile to hear her vindication, was to subject herself to insolence, and almost to court indignity. She disdained even to write to him, since his behaviour called for resentment, not concession; and such an eagerness to be heard, in opposition to all discouragement, would be practising a meanness that would almost merit repulsion.

Her first inclination was to write to Mrs. Delvile; but what now, to her, was either her defence or accusation? She had solemnly renounced all further intercourse with her, she had declared against writing again, and prohibited her letters: and, therefore, after much fluctuation of opinion, her delicacy concurred with her judgment, to conclude it would be most proper, in a situation so intricate, to leave the matter to chance, and commit her character to time.

In the evening, while she was at tea with Lady Margaret and Miss Bennet, she was suddenly called out to speak to a young woman; and found, to her great surprise, she was no other than Henrietta.

"Ah, madam!" she cried, "how angrily did you go away this morning! it has made me miserable ever since, and if you go out of town without forgiving me, I shall fret myself quite ill! My mother is gone out to tea, and I have run here all alone, and in the dark, and in the wet, to beg and pray you will forgive me, for else I don't know what I shall do!"

"Sweet, gentle girl!" cried Cecilia, affectionately embracing her, "if you had excited all the anger I am capable of feeling, such softness as this would banish it, and make me love you more than ever!"

Henrietta then said, in her excuse, that she had thought

herself quite sure of her brother's absence, who almost always spent the whole day at the bookseller's, as in writing himself he perpetually wanted to consult other authors, and had very few books at their lodgings: but she would not mention that the room was his, lest Cecilia should object to making use of it, and she knew she had no other chance of having the conversation with her she had so very long wished for. She then again begged her pardon, and hoped the behaviour of her mother would not induce her to give her up, as she was shocked at it beyond measure, and as her brother, she assured her, was as innocent of it as herself.

Cecilia heard her with pleasure, and felt for her an encreasing regard. The openness of her confidence in the morning had merited all her affection, and she gave her the warmest protestations of a friendship which she was certain would be lasting as her life.

Henrietta then, with a countenance that spoke the lightness of her heart, hastily took her leave, saying, she did not dare be out longer, lest her mother should discover her excursion. Cecilia insisted, however, upon her going in a chair, which she ordered her servant to attend, and take care himself to discharge.

This visit, joined to the tender and unreserved conversation of the morning, gave Cecilia the strongest desire to invite her to her house in the country; but the terror of Mrs. Belfield's insinuations, added to the cruel interpretations she had to expect from Mr. Delvile, forbid her indulging this wish, though it was the only one that just now she could form.

CHAPTER IV.

A CALM.

CECILIA took leave over-night of the family, as she would not stay their rising in the morning: Mr. Monckton, though certain not to sleep when she was going, forbearing to mark his solicitude by quitting his apartment

at any unusual hour. Lady Margaret parted from her with her accustomed ungraciousness, and Miss Bennet, because in her presence, in a manner scarce less displeasing.

The next morning, with only her servants, the moment it was light, she set out. Her journey was without incident or interruption, and she went immediately to the house of Mrs. Bayley, where she had settled to board till her own was finished.

Mrs. Bayley was a mere good sort of woman, who lived decently well with her servants, and tolerably well with her neighbours, upon a small annuity, which made her easy and comfortable, though by no means superior to such an addition to her little income as an occasional boarder might produce.

Here Cecilia continued a full month; which time had no other employment than what she voluntarily gave to herself by active deeds of benevolence.

At Christmas, to the no little joy of the neighbourhood, she took possession of her own house, which was situated about three miles from Bury.

The better sort of people were happy to see her thus settled amongst them, and the poorer, who by what they already had received, knew well what they might still expect, regarded the day in which she fixed herself in her mansion, as a day to themselves of prosperity and triumph.

As she was no longer, as hitherto, repairing to a temporary habitation, which at pleasure she might quit, and to which, at a certain period, she could have no possible claim, but to a house which was her own for ever, or, at least, could solely from her own choice be transferred, she determined, as much as was in her power, in quitting her desultory dwellings, to empty her mind of the transactions which had passed in them, and upon entering a house where she was permanently to reside, to make the expulsion of her past sorrows the basis upon which to establish her future serenity.

And this, though a work of pain and difficulty, was not impracticable; her sensibility, indeed, was keen, and she had suffered from it the utmost torture; but her feelings

were not more powerful than her understanding was strong, and her fortitude was equal to her trials. Her calamities had saddened, but not weakened her mind, and the words of Delvile in speaking of his mother occurred to her now with all the conviction of experience, that "inevitable evils are ever best supported, . . . because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling."[1]

A plan by which so great a revolution was to be wrought in her mind, was not to be effected by any sudden effort of magnanimity, but by a regular and even tenour of courage mingled with prudence. Nothing, therefore, appeared to her so indispensable as constant employment, by which a variety of new images might force their way in her mind to supplant the old ones, and by which no time might be allowed for brooding over melancholy retrospections.

Her first effort, in this work of mental reformation, was to part with Fidel, whom hitherto she had almost involuntarily guarded, but whom she only could see to revive the most dangerous recollections. She sent him, therefore, to the castle, but without any message; Mrs. Delvile, she was sure, would require none to make her rejoice in his restoration.

Her next step was writing to Albany, who had given her his direction, to acquaint him she was now ready to put in practice their long concerted scheme. Albany instantly hastened to her, and joyfully accepted the office of becoming at once her almoner and her monitor. He made it his business to seek objects of distress, and, always but too certain to find them, of conducting her himself to their habitations, and then leaving to her own liberality the assistance their several cases demanded: and, in the overflowing of his zeal upon these occasions, and the rapture of his heart in thus disposing, almost at his pleasure, of her noble fortune, he seemed, at times, to feel an extacy that, from its novelty and its excess, was almost too exquisite to be borne.

He joined with the beggars in pouring blessings upon her head, he prayed for her with the poor, and he thanked her with the succoured.

The pew-opener and her children failed not to keep their

[1] See page 115—*Author's Note.*

appointment, and Cecilia presently contrived to settle them in her neighbourhood; where the poor woman, as she recovered her strength, soon got a little work, and all deficiences in her power of maintaining herself were supplied by her generous patroness. The children, however, she ordered to be coarsely brought up, having no intention to provide for them but by helping them to common employments.

The promise, also, so long made to Mrs. Harrel of an apartment in her house, was now performed. That lady accepted it with the utmost alacrity, glad to make any change in her situation, which constant solitude had rendered wholly insupportable. Mr. Arnott accompanied her to the house, and spent one day there; but receiving from Cecilia, though extremely civil and sweet to him, no hint of any invitation for repeating his visit, he left it in sadness, and returned to his own in deep dejection. Cecilia saw with concern how he nourished his hopeless passion, but knew that to suffer his visits would almost authorize his feeding it; and while she pitied unaffectedly the unhappiness she occasioned, she resolved to double her own efforts towards avoiding similar wretchedness.

This action, however, was a point of honour, not of friendship, the time being long since past that the society of Mrs. Harrel could afford her any pleasure; but the promises she had so often made to Mr. Harrel in his distresses, though extorted from her merely by the terrors of the moment, still were promises, and, therefore, she held herself bound to fulfil them.

Yet, far from finding comfort in this addition to her family, Mrs. Harrel proved to her nothing more than a trouble and an incumbrance; with no inherent resources, she was continually in search of occasional supplies; she fatigued Cecilia with wonder at the privacy of her life, and tormented her with proposals of parties and entertainments. She was eternally in amazement that with powers so large she had wishes so confined, and was evidently disappointed that upon coming to so ample an estate, she lived, with respect to herself and her family, with no more magnificence or show than if heiress to only five hundred pounds a year.

But Cecilia was determined to think and to live for herself, without regard to unmeaning wonder or selfish remonstrances; she had neither ambition for splendour, nor spirits for dissipation; the recent sorrow of her heart had deadened it for the present to all personal taste of happiness, and her only chance for regaining it seemed through the medium of bestowing it upon others. She had seen, too, by Mr. Harrel, how wretchedly external brilliancy could cover inward woe, and she had learned at Delvile Castle to grow sick of parade and grandeur. Her equipage, therefore, was without glare, though not without elegance; her table was plain, though hospitably plentiful; her servants were for use, though too numerous to be for labour. The system of her economy, like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reason, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example, nor by emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood.

But though thus deviating in her actions from the usual customs of the young and rich, she was peculiarly careful not to offend them by singularity of manners. When she mixed with them, she was easy, unaffected, and well bred, and though she saw them but seldom, her good humour and desire of obliging kept them always her friends. The plan she had early formed at Mrs. Harrel's she now studied daily to put in practice; but that part by which the useless or frivolous were to be excluded her house, she found could only be supported by driving from her half her acquaintance.

Another part, also, of that project she found still less easy of adoption, which was solacing herself with the society of the wise, good, and intelligent. Few answered this description, and those few were with difficulty attainable. Many might with joy have sought out her liberal dwelling, but no one had idly waited till the moment it was at her disposal. All who possessed at once both talents and wealth, were so generally courted they were rarely to be procured; and all who to talents alone owed their consequence, demanded, if worth acquiring, time and delicacy to be obtained. Fortune she knew, however, was so often at war with Nature, that she doubted not shortly meeting those who would gladly avail themselves of her offered protection.

Yet, tired of the murmurs of Mrs. Harrel, she longed for some relief from her society, and her desire daily grew stronger to owe that relief to Henrietta Belfield. The more she meditated upon this wish, the less unattainable it appeared to her, till by frequently combating its difficulties, she began to consider them imaginary: Mrs. Belfield, while her son was actually with herself, might see she took not Henrietta as his appendage; and Mr. Delvile, should he make further enquiries, might hear that her real connection was with the sister, since she received her in the country, where the brother made no pretence to follow her. She considered, too, how ill she should be rewarded in giving up Henrietta for Mr. Delvile, who was already determined to think ill of her, and whose prejudices no sacrifice would remove.

Having hesitated, therefore, some time between the desire of present alleviation, and the fear of future mischief, the consciousness of her own innocence at length vanquished all dread of unjust censure, and she wrote an invitation to Henrietta enclosed in a letter to her mother.

The answer of Henrietta expressed her rapture at the proposal; and that of Mrs. Belfield made no objection but to the expense.

Cecilia, therefore, sent her own maid to travel with her into Suffolk, with proper directions to pay for the journey.

The gratitude of the delighted Henrietta at the meeting was boundless; and her joy at so unexpected a mark of favour made her half wild. Cecilia suffered it not to languish for want of kindness to support it; she took her to her bosom, became the soother of all her cares, and reposed in her, in return, every thought that led not to Delvile.

There, however, she was uniformly silent; solemnly and eternally parted from him, far from trusting the secret of her former connection to Henrietta, the whole study of her life was to drive the remembrance of it from herself.

Henrietta now tasted a happiness to which as yet her whole life had been a stranger; she was suddenly removed from turbulent vulgarity to the enjoyment of calm elegance; and the gentleness of her disposition, instead of being tyrannically imposed upon, not only made her loved with

affection, but treated with the most scrupulous delicacy. Cecilia had her share in all the comfort she bestowed; she had now a friend to oblige, and a companion to converse with. She communicated to her all her schemes, and made her the partner of her benevolent excursions; she found her disposition as amiable upon trial, as her looks and her manners had been engaging at first sight; and her constant presence and constant sweetness, imperceptibly revived her spirits, and gave a new interest to her existence.

Meantime Mr. Monckton, who returned in about a fortnight to the Grove, observed the encreasing influence of Albany with the most serious concern. The bounties of Cecilia, extensive, magnificent, unlimited, were the theme of every tongue, and though sometimes censured and sometimes admired, they were wondered at universally. He suffered her for awhile to go on without remonstrance, hoping her enthusiasm would abate, as its novelty wore out: but finding that week following week was still distinguished by some fresh act of beneficence, he grew so alarmed and uneasy, he could restrain himself no longer. He spoke to her with warmth, he represented her conduct as highly dangerous in its consequence; he said she would but court impostors from every corner of the kingdom; called Albany a lunatic, whom she should rather avoid than obey; and insinuated that if a report was spread of her proceedings, a charity so prodigal, would excite such alarm, that no man would think even her large and splendid fortune would ensure him from ruin in seeking her alliance.

Cecilia heard this exhortation without either terror or impatience, and answered it with the utmost steadiness. His influence over her mind was no longer uncontrolled, for though her suspicions were not strengthened, they had never been removed, and friendship has no foe so dangerous as distrust. She thanked him, however, for his zeal, but assured him his apprehensions were groundless, since though she acted from inclination, she acted not without thought. Her income was very large, and she was wholly without family or connection; to spend it merely upon herself would be something still worse than extravagance, it must result from wilfulness the most inexcusable, as her disposition was naturally averse to luxury and expense.

She might save indeed, but for whom? not a creature had such a claim upon her; and with regard to herself, she was so provided for it would be unnecessary. She would never, she declared, run in debt even for a week, but while her estate was wholly clear she would spend it without restriction.

To his hint of any future alliance, she only said that those who disapproved her conduct, would probably be those she should disapprove in her turn; should such an event however take place, the retrenching from that time all her present peculiar expenses, would surely, in a clear three thousand pounds a year, leave her rich enough for any man, without making it incumbent upon her, at present, to deny herself the only pleasure she could taste, in bestowing that money which to her was superfluous, upon those who received it as the prolongation of their existence.

A firmness so deliberate in a system he so much dreaded, greatly shocked Mr. Monckton, though it intimidated him from opposing it; he saw she was too earnest, and too well satisfied she was right, to venture giving her disgust by controverting her arguments: the conversation, therefore, ended with new discontent to himself, and with an impression upon the mind of Cecilia, that though he was zealous and friendly, he was somewhat too worldly and suspicious.

She went on, therefore, as before, distributing with a lavish hand all she could spare from her own household; careful of nothing but of guarding against imposition, which though she sometimes unavoidably endured, her discernment, and the activity of her investigating diligence, saved her from suffering frequently. And the steadiness with which she repulsed those whom she detected in deceit, was a check upon tricks and fraud, though it could not wholly put a stop to them.

Money, to her, had long appeared worthless and valueless; it had failed to procure her the establishment for which she once flattered herself it seemed purposely designed; it had been disdained by the Delviles, for the sake of whose connection she had alone ever truly rejoiced in possessing it; and after such a conviction of its inefficacy to secure her happiness, she regarded it as of little

importance to herself, and therefore thought it almost the due of those whose distresses gave it a consequence to which with her it was a stranger.

In this manner with Cecilia passed the first winter of her majority. She had sedulously filled it with occupations, and her occupations had proved fertile in keeping her mind from idleness, and in restoring it to cheerfulness.

Calls upon her attention so soothing, and avocations so various for her time, had answered the great purpose for which originally she had planned them, in almost forcing from her thoughts those sorrows which, if indulged, would have rested in them incessantly.

CHAPTER V.

AN ALARM.

THE spring was now advancing, and the weather was remarkably fine; when one morning, while Cecilia was walking with Mrs. Harrel and Henrietta on the lawn before her house, to which the last dinner bell was just summoning them to return, Mrs. Harrel looked round and stopt at sight of a gentleman galloping towards them, who in less than a minute approached, and dismounting and leaving his horse to his servant, struck them all at the same instant to be no other than young Delvile!

A sight so unexpected, so unaccountable, so wonderful, after an absence so long, and to which they were mutually bound, almost wholly over-powered Cecilia from surprise and a thousand other feelings, and she caught Mrs. Harrel by the arm, not knowing what she did, as if for succour; while Henrietta, with scarce less, though much more glad emotion, suddenly exclaimed, "'tis Mr. Delvile!" and sprang forward to meet him.

He had reached them, and in a voice that spoke hurry and perturbation, respectfully made his compliments to them all, before Cecilia recovered even the use of her feet: but no sooner were they restored to her, than she employed

them with the quickest motion in her power, still leaning upon Mrs. Harrel, to hasten into the house. Her solemn promise to Mrs. Delvile became uppermost in her thoughts, and her surprise was soon succeeded by displeasure, that thus, without any preparation, he forced her to break it by an interview she had no means to prevent.

Just as they reached the entrance into the house, the butler came to tell Cecilia that dinner was upon the table. Delvile then went up to her, and said, "May I wait upon you for one instant before—or after you dine?"

"I am engaged, sir," answered she, though hardly able to speak, "for the whole day."

"You will not, I hope, refuse to hear me," cried he, eagerly, "I cannot write what I have to say,—"

"There is no occasion that you should, sir," interrupted she, "since I should scarcely find time to read it."

She then courtsied, though without looking at him, and went into the house; Delvile remaining in utter dismay, not daring, however wishing, to follow her. But when Mrs. Harrel, much surprised at behaviour so unusual from Cecilia, approached him with some civil speeches, he started, and wishing her good day, bowed, and remounted his horse: pursued by the soft eyes of Henrietta, till wholly out of sight.

They then both followed Cecilia to the dining-parlour.

Had not Mrs. Harrel been of this small party, the dinner would have been served in vain; Cecilia, still trembling with emotion, bewildered with conjecture, angry with Delvile for thus surprising her, angry with herself for so severely receiving him, amazed what had tempted him to such a violation of their joint agreement, and irresolute as much what to wish as what to think, was little disposed for eating, and with difficulty compelled herself to do the honours of her table.

Henrietta, whom the sight of Delvile had at once delighted and disturbed, whom the behaviour of Cecilia had filled with wonder and consternation, and whom the evident inquietude and disappointment which that behaviour had given to Delvile, had struck with grief and terror, could not swallow even a morsel, but having cut her meat about her plate, gave it, untouched, to a servant.

Mrs. Harrel, however, though she had had her share in the surprise, had wholly escaped all other emotion; and only concluded in her own mind, that Cecilia could sometimes be out of humour and ill bred, as well as the rest of the world.

While the desert was serving, a note was brought to Henrietta, which a servant was waiting in great haste to have answered.

Henrietta, stranger to all forms of politeness, though by nature soft, obliging and delicate, opened it immediately. She started as she cast her eye over it, but blushed, sparkled, and looked enchanted; and hastily rising, without even a thought of any apology, ran out of the room to answer it.

Cecilia, whose quick eye, by a glance unavoidable, had seen the hand of Delvile, was filled with new amazement at the sight. As soon as the servants were gone, she begged Mrs. Harrel to excuse her, and went to her own apartment.

Here, in a few minutes, she was followed by Henrietta, whose countenance beamed with pleasure, and whose voice spoke tumultuous delight. "My dear, dear Miss Beverley!" she cried, "I have such a thing to tell you!—you would never guess it,—I don't know how to believe it myself,—but Mr. Delvile has written to me!—he has indeed! that note was from him.—I have been locking it up, for fear of accidents, but I'll run and fetch it, that you may see it yourself."

She then ran away; leaving Cecilia much perplexed, much uneasy for herself, and both grieved and alarmed for the too tender, too susceptible Henrietta, who was thus easily the sport of every airy and credulous hope.

"If I did not show it you," cried Henrietta, running back in a moment, "you would never think it possible, for it is to make such a request—that it has frightened me almost out of my wits!"

Cecilia then read the note.

To Miss Belfield.

Mr. Delvile presents his compliments to Miss Belfield, and begs to be permitted to wait upon her for a few

minutes, at any time in the afternoon she will be so good as to appoint.

"Only think," cried the rapturous Henrietta, "it was *me*, poor simple *me*, of all people, that he wanted so to speak with!—I am sure I thought a different thought when he went away! but do, dearest Miss Beverley, tell me this one thing, what do you think he can have to say to me?"

"Indeed," replied Cecilia, extremely embarrassed, "it is impossible for me to conjecture."

"If *you* can't, I am sure, then, it is no wonder *I* can't! and I have been thinking of a million of things in a minute. It can't be about any business, because I know nothing in the world of any business; and it can't be about my brother, because he would go to our house in town about him; and there he would see him himself; and it can't be about my dear Miss Beverley, because then he would have written the note to her: and it can't be about anybody else, because I know nobody else of his acquaintance."

Thus went on the sanguine Henrietta, settling whom and what it could *not* be about, till she left but the one thing to which her wishes pointed that it *could* be about. Cecilia heard her with true compassion, certain that she was deceiving herself with imaginations the most pernicious; yet unable to know how to quell them, while in such doubt and darkness herself.

This conversation was soon interrupted, by a message that a gentleman in the parlour begged to speak with Miss Belfield.

"O dearest, dearest Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, with encreasing agitation, "what in the world shall I say to him, advise me, pray advise me, for I can't think of a single word!"

"Impossible, my dear Henrietta, unless I knew what he would say to you!"

"O, but I can guess, I can guess!" cried she, her cheeks glowing, while her whole frame shook, "and I sha'n't know what in the whole world to answer him! I know I shall behave like a fool,—I know I shall disgrace myself sadly!"

Cecilia, truly sorry Delvile should see her in such emotion, endeavoured earnestly to compose her, though never

less tranquil herself. But she could not succeed, and she went down stairs with expectations of happiness almost too potent for her reason.

Not such were those of Cecilia; a dread of some new conflict took possession of her mind, that mind so long tortured with struggles, so lately restored to serenity!

Henrietta soon returned, but not the same Henrietta she went;—the glow, the hope, the flutter were all over; she looked pale and wan, but attempting, as she entered the room, to call up a smile, she failed, and burst into tears.

Cecilia threw her arms round her neck, and tried to console her; but, happy to hide her face in her bosom, she only gave the freer indulgence to her grief, and, rather melted than comforted by her tenderness, sobbed aloud.

Cecilia too easily conjectured the disappointment she had met, to pain her by asking it; she forbore even to gratify her own curiosity by questions that could not but lead to her mortification, and suffering her to take her own time for what she had to communicate, she hung over her in silence with the most patient pity.

Henrietta was very sensible of this kindness, though she knew not half its merit: but it was a long time before she could articulate, for sobbing, that *all* Mr. Delvile wanted, at last, was only to beg she would acquaint Miss Beverley, that he had done himself the honour of waiting upon her with a message from Mrs. Delvile.

"From Mrs. Delvile?" exclaimed Cecilia, all emotion in her turn, "good heaven! how much, then, have I been to blame? where is he now?—where can I send to him?—tell me, my sweet Henrietta, this instant!"

"Oh, madam!" cried Henrietta, bursting into a fresh flood of tears, "how foolish have I been to open my silly heart to you!—he is come to pay his addresses to you!—I am sure he is!—"

"No, no, no!" cried Cecilia, "indeed he is not!—but I must, I ought to see him,—where, my love, is he?"

"In the parlour,—waiting for an answer.—"

Cecilia, who at any other time would have been provoked at such a delay in the delivery of a message so important, felt now nothing but concern for Henrietta, whom she hastily kissed, but instantly, however, quitted, and hurried

to Delvile, with expectations almost equally sanguine as those her poor friend but the moment before had crushed.

"Oh, now," thought she, "if at last Mrs. Delvile herself has relented, with what joy will I give up all reserve, all disguise, and frankly avow the faithful affection of my heart!"

Delvile received her, not with the eagerness with which he had addressed her; he looked extremely disturbed, and, even after her entrance, undetermined how to begin.

She waited, however, his explanation in silence; and, after an irresolute pause, he said, with a gravity not wholly free from resentment, "I presumed, madam, to wait upon you from the permission of my mother; but I believe I have obtained it so late, that the influence I hoped from it is past!"

"I had no means, sir," answered she, cheerfully, "to know that you came from her: I should else have received her commands without any hesitation."

"I would thank you for the honour you do her, were it less pointedly exclusive. I have, however, no right of reproach! yet suffer me to ask, could you, madam, after such a parting, after a renunciation so absolute of all future claim upon you, which though extorted from me by duty, I was bound, having promised, to fulfil by principle—could you imagine me so unsteady, so dishonourable, as to obtrude myself into your presence while that promise was still in force?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, in whom a secret hope every moment grew stronger, "I have been too hasty; I did indeed believe Mrs. Delvile would never authorize such a visit; but as you have so much surprised me, I have a right to your pardon for a little doubt."

"There spoke Miss Beverley!" cried Delvile, re-animating at this little apology, "the same, the unaltered Miss Beverley I hoped to find!—yet, is she unaltered? am I not too precipitate? and is the tale I have heard about Belfield, a dream? an error? a falsehood?"

"But that so quick a succession of quarrels," said Cecilia, half smiling, "would be endless perplexity, I, now, would be affronted that you can ask me such a question."

"Had I, indeed, *thought* it a question," cried he, "I would not have asked it: but never for a moment did I

credit it, till the rigour of your repulse alarmed me. You have condescended, now, to account for that, and I am, therefore, encouraged to make known to you the purpose of my venturing this visit. Yet not with confidence shall I speak, if, scarce even with hope!—it is a purpose that is the offspring of despair,—"

"One thing, sir," cried Cecilia, who now became frightened again, "let me say before you proceed; if your purpose has not the sanction of Mrs. Delvile, as well as your visit, I would gladly be excused hearing it, since I shall most certainly refuse it."

"I would mention nothing," answered he, "without her concurrence; she has given it me: and my father himself has permitted my present application."

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, "is it possible!" clasping her hands together in the eagerness of her surprise and delight.

"*Is it possible!*" repeated Delvile, with a look of rapture; "ah, Miss Beverley!——once my own Cecilia!—do you, can you *wish* it possible?"

"No, no!" cried she, while pleasure and expectation sparkled in her eyes, "I wish nothing about it.—Yet tell me how it has happened,—I am *curious*," added she, smiling, "though not interested in it."

"What hope would this sweetness give me," cried he, "were my scheme almost any other than it is!—but you cannot,—no, it would be unreasonable,—it would be madness to expect your compliance!—it is next to madness even in me to wish it,—but how shall a man who is desperate be prudent and circumspect?"

"Spare, spare yourself," cried the ingenuous Cecilia, "this unnecessary pain!——you will find from me no unnecessary scruples."

"You know not what you say!—all noble as you are, the sacrifice I have to propose—"

"Speak it," cried she, "with confidence! speak it even with certainty of success! I will be wholly undisguised, and openly, honestly own to you, that no proposal, no sacrifice can be mentioned, to which I will not instantly agree, if first it has had the approbation of Mrs. Delvile."

Delvile's gratitude and thanks for a concession never be-

fore so voluntarily made to him, interrupted, for awhile, even his power of explaining himself. And now, for the first time, Cecilia's sincerity was cheerful, since now, for the first time, it seemed opposed by no duty.

When still, therefore, he hesitated, she herself held out her hand to him, saying, "what must I do more? must I offer this pledge to you?"

"For my life would I not resign it!" cried he, delightedly receiving it; "but, oh, how soon will you withdraw it, when the only terms upon which I can hold it, are those of making it sign from itself its natural right and inheritance?"

Cecilia, not comprehending him, only looked amazed, and he proceeded.

"Can you, for my sake, make such a sacrifice as this? can you for a man who for yours is not permitted to give up his name, give up yourself the fortune of your late uncle? consent to such settlements as I can make upon you from my own? part with so splendid an income wholly and for ever?—and with only your paternal ten thousand pounds condescend to become mine, as if your uncle had never existed, and you had been heiress to no other wealth?"

This, indeed, was a stroke to Cecilia unequalled by any she had met, and more cruel than any she could have in reserve. At the proposal of parting with her uncle's fortune, which, desirable as it was, had as yet been only productive to her of misery, her heart, disinterested, and wholly careless of money, was prompt to accede to the condition, but at the mention of her paternal fortune,—that fortune, of which, now, not the smallest vestige remained, horror seized all her faculties! she turned pale, she trembled, she involuntarily drew back her hand, and betrayed, by speechless agitation, the sudden agonies of her soul!

Delvile, struck by this evident dismay, instantly concluded his plan had disgusted her. He waited some minutes in anxious expectation of an answer, but finding her silence continue while her emotion encreased, the deepest crimson dyed his face, and unable to check his chagrin, though not daring to confess his disappointment, he suddenly quitted her, and walked, in much disorder, about the room. But soon recovering some composure, from the assistance of pride, "Pardon, madam," he said, "a trial such as no man

can be vindicated in making. I have indulged a romantic whim, which your better judgment disapproves, and I receive but the mortification my presumption deserved."

"You know not then," said Cecilia, in a faint voice, "my inability to comply?"

"Your ability, or inability, I presume, are elective?"

"Oh, no!—my power is lost!—my fortune itself is gone!"

"Impossible! utterly impossible!" cried he with vehemence.

"Oh that it were!—your father knows it but too well!"

"My father!"

"Did he, then, never hint it to you?"

"Oh, distraction!" cried Delvile, "what horrible confirmation is coming!" and again he walked away, as if wanting courage to hear her.

Cecilia was too much shocked to force upon him her explanation; but presently returning to her, he said, "*You*, only, could have made this credible!"

"Had you, then, actually heard it?"

"Oh, I had heard it as the most infamous of falsehoods! my heart swelled with indignation at so villainous a calumny, and had it not come from my father, my resentment at it had been inveterate!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "the fact is undeniable! yet the circumstances you may have heard with it, are, I doubt not, exaggerated."

"Exaggerated, indeed!" he answered; "I was told you had been surprised, concealed with Belfield in a back room, I was told that your parental fortune was totally exhausted, and that during your minority you had been a dealer with Jews! I was told all this by my father;—you may believe I had else not easily been made hear it!"

"Yet, thus far," said she, "he told you but what is true; though——"

"True!" interrupted Delvile, with a start almost frantic. "Oh, never, then, was truth so scandalously wronged!—— I denied the whole charge!—I disbelieved every syllable! —I pledged my own honour to prove every assertion false!"

"Generous Delvile!" cried Cecilia, melting into tears, "this is what I expected from you! and, believe me, in *your* integrity my reliance had been similar!"

"Why does Miss Beverley weep?" cried he, softened, and approaching her, "and why has she given me this alarm? these things must at least have been misrepresented, deign, then, to clear up a mystery in which suspense is torture!"

Cecilia, then, with what precision and clearness her agitation allowed her, related the whole history of her taking up the money of the Jew for Mr. Harrel, and told, without reserve, the reason of her trying to abscond from his father at Mrs. Belfield's. Delvile listened to her account with almost an agony of attention, now admiring her conduct; now resenting her ill usage; now compassionating her losses; but though variously moved by different parts, receiving from the whole the delight he most coveted in the establishment of her innocence.

Thanks and applause the warmest, both accompanied and followed her narration; and then, at her request, he related in return the several incidents and circumstances to which he had owed the permission of this visit.

He had meant immediately to have gone abroad; but the indisposition of his mother made him unwilling to leave the kingdom till her health seemed in a situation less precarious. That time, however, came not; the winter advanced, and she grew evidently worse.—He gave over, therefore, his design till the next spring, when, if she were able, it was her desire to try the South of France for her recovery, whither he meant to conduct her.

But, during his attendance upon her, the plan he had just mentioned occurred to him, and he considered how much greater would be his chance of happiness in marrying Cecilia with scarce any fortune at all, than in marrying another with the largest. He was convinced she was far other than expensive, or a lover of show, and soon flattered himself she might be prevailed upon to concur with him, that in living together, though comparatively upon little, they should mutually be happier than in living asunder upon much.

When he started this scheme to his mother, she heard it with mingled admiration of his disinterestedness, and regret at its occasion; yet the loftiness of her own mind, her high personal value for Cecilia, her anxiety to see her son finally

settled while she lived, lest his disappointment should keep him single from a lasting disgust, joined to a dejection of spirits from an apprehension that her interference had been cruel, all favoured his scheme, and forbid her resistance. She had often protested, in their former conflicts, that had Cecilia been portionless, her objections had been less than to an estate so conditioned; and that to give to her son a woman so exalted in herself, she would have conquered the mere opposition of interest, though that of family honour she held invincible. Delvile now called upon her to remember those words, and ever strict in fidelity, she still promised to abide by them.

"Ah!" thought Cecilia, "is virtue, then, as inconsistent as vice? and can the same character be thus high-souled, thus nobly disinterested with regard to riches, whose pride is so narrow and so insurmountable with respect to family prejudice!"

Yet such a sacrifice from Cecilia herself, whose income intitled her to settlements the most splendid, Mrs. Delvile thought scarcely to be solicited; but as her son was conscious he gave up in expectation no less than she would give up in possession, he resolved upon making the experiment, and felt an internal assurance of success.

This matter being finally settled with his mother, the harder task remained of vanquishing the father, by whom, and before whom the name of Cecilia was never mentioned, not even after his return from town, though loaded with imaginary charges against her. Mr. Delvile held it a diminution of his own in the honour of his son, to suppose he wanted still fresh motives for resigning her. He kept, therefore, to himself the ill opinion he brought down, as a resource in case of danger, but a resource he disdained to make use of, unless driven to it by absolute necessity.

But, at the new proposal of his son, the accusation held in reserve broke out; he called Cecilia a dabbler with Jews, and said she had been so from the time of her uncle's death; he charged her with the grossest general extravagance, to which he added a most insidious attack upon her character, drawn from her visits at Belfield's, of long standing, as well as the particular time when he had himself surprised her concealed with the young man in a back par-

lour: and he asserted, that most of the large sums she was continually taking up from her fortune, were lavished without scruple upon this dangerous and improper favourite.

Delvile had heard this accusation with a rage scarce restrained from violence; confident in her innocence, he boldly pronounced the whole a forgery, and demanded the author of such cruel defamation. Mr. Delvile, much offended, refused to name any authority, but consented, with an air of triumph, to abide by the effect of his own proposal, and gave him a supercilious promise no longer to oppose the marriage, if the terms he meant to offer to Miss Beverley, of renouncing her uncle's estate, and producing her father's fortune, were accepted.

"Oh, little did I credit," said Delvile in conclusion, "that he knew indeed so well this last condition was impracticable! his assertions were without proof; I thought them prejudiced surmises; and I came in the full hope I should convict him of his error. My mother too, who warmly and even angrily defended you, was as firmly satisfied as myself that the whole was a mistake, and that enquiry would prove your fortune as undiminished as your purity. How will she be shocked at the tale I have now to unfold! how irritated at your injuries from Harrel! how grieved that your own too great benevolence should be productive of such black aspersions upon your character!"

"I have been," cried Cecilia, "too facile and too unguarded; yet always, at the moment, I seemed but guided by common humanity. I have ever thought myself secure of more wealth than I could require, and regarded the want of money as an evil from which I was unavoidably exempted. My own fortune, therefore, appeared to me of small consequence, while the revenue of my uncle ensured me perpetual prosperity.—Oh, had I foreseen this moment!—"

"Would you, then, have listened to my romantic proposal?"

"Would I have listened?—do you not see too plainly I could not have hesitated?"

"Oh, yet, then, most generous of human beings, yet then be mine! By our own economy we will pay off our mortgages; by living awhile abroad, we will clear all our estates; I will still keep the name to which my family is

bigotted, and my gratitude for your compliance shall make you forget what you lose by it!"

"Speak not to me such words!" cried Cecilia, hastily rising: "your friends will not listen to them, neither, therefore, must I."

"My friends," cried he, with energy, "are henceforth out of the question: my father's concurrence with a proposal he *knew* you had not power to grant, was in fact a mere permission to insult you; for if, instead of dark charges, he had given any authority for your losses, I had myself spared you the shock you have so undeservedly received from hearing it.—But to consent to a plan which *could* not be accepted!—to make *me* a tool to offer indignity to Miss Beverley!——He has released me from his power by so erroneous an exertion of it, and my own honour has a claim to which his commands must give place. That honour binds me to Miss Beverley as forcibly as my admiration, and no voice but her own shall determine my future destiny."

"That voice, then," said Cecilia, "again refers you to your mother. Mr. Delvile, indeed, has not treated me kindly; and this last mock concession was unnecessary cruelty; but Mrs. Delvile merits my utmost respect, and I will listen to nothing which has not her previous sanction."

"But will her sanction be sufficient? and may I hope, in obtaining it, the security of yours?"

"When I have said I will hear nothing without it, may you not almost infer—I will refuse nothing with it?"

The acknowledgments he would now have poured forth, Cecilia would not hear, telling him, with some gaiety, they were yet unauthorized by Mrs. Delvile. She insisted upon his leaving her immediately, and never again returning, without his mother's express approbation. With regard to his father, she left him totally to his own inclination; she had received from him nothing but pride and incivility, and determined to show publicly her superior respect for Mrs. Delvile, by whose discretion and decision she was content to abide.

"Will you not, then, from time to time," cried Delvile, "suffer me to consult with you?"

"No, no," answered she, "do not ask it! I have never

been insincere with you; never, but from motives not to be overcome, reserved, even for a moment; I have told you I will put everything into the power of Mrs. Delvile, but I will not a second time risk my peace by any action unknown to her."

Delvile gratefully acknowledged her goodness, and promised to require nothing more. He then obeyed her by taking leave, eager himself to put an end to this new uncertainty, and supplicating only that her good wishes might follow his enterprise.

And thus, again, was wholly broken the tranquillity of Cecilia; new hopes, however faint, awakened all her affections, and strong fears, but too reasonable, interrupted her repose. Her destiny, once more, was as undecided as ever, and the expectations she had crushed, retook possession of her heart.

The suspicions she had conceived of Mr. Monckton again occurred to her; though unable to ascertain and unwilling to believe them, she tried to drive them from her thoughts. She lamented, however, with bitterness, her unfortunate connection with Mr. Harrel, whose unworthy impositions upon her kindness of temper and generosity, now proved to her an evil far more serious and extensive, than in the midst of her repugnance to them she had ever apprehended.

CHAPTER VI.

A SUSPENSE.

DELVILE had been gone but a short time, before Henrietta, her eyes still red, though no longer streaming, opened the parlour door, and asked if she might come in?

Cecilia wished to be alone, yet could not refuse her.

"Well, madam," cried she, with a forced smile, and constrained air of bravery, "did not I guess right?"

"In what?" said Cecilia, unwilling to understand her.

"In what I said would happen?—I am sure you know what I mean."

Cecilia, extremely embarrassed, made no answer; she

much regretted the circumstances which had prevented an earlier communication, and was uncertain whether, now, it would prove most kind or most cruel to acquaint her with what was in agitation, which, should it terminate in nothing, was unnecessarily wounding her delicacy for the openness of her confidence, and which, however serviceable it might prove to her in the end, was in the means so rough and piercing she felt the utmost repugnance to the experiment.

"You think me, madam, too free," said Henrietta, "in asking such a question; and indeed your kindness has been so great, it may well make me forget myself: but if it does, I am sure I deserve you should send me home directly, and then there is not much fear I shall soon be brought to my senses!"

"No, my dear Henrietta, I can never think you too free; I have told you already every thing I thought you would have pleasure in hearing; whatever I have concealed, I have been fearful would only pain you."

"I have *deserved*, madam," said she, with spirit, "to be pained, for I have behaved with the folly of a baby. I am very angry with myself indeed! I was old enough to have known better,—and I ought to have been wise enough."

"You must then be angry with yourself, next," said Cecilia, anxious to re-encourage her, "for all the love that I bear you; since to your openness and frankness it was entirely owing."

"But there are some things that people should *not* be frank in; however, I am only come now to beg you will tell me, madam, when it is to be; and don't think I ask out of nothing but curiosity, for I have a very great reason for it indeed."

"What be, my dear Henrietta?—you are very rapid in your ideas!"

"I will tell you, madam, what my reason is; I shall go away to my own home,—and so I would if it were ten times a worse home than it is!——just exactly the day before. Because afterwards, I shall never like to look that gentleman in the face,—never, never!—for married ladies I know are not to be trusted!"

"Be not apprehensive; you have no occasion. Whatever

may be my fate, I will never be so treacherous as to betray my beloved Henrietta to *any* body."

"May I ask you, madam, one question?"

"Certainly."

"Why did all this never happen before?"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, much distressed, "I know not that it will happen now."

"Why what, dear madam, can hinder it?"

"A thousand, thousand things! nothing can be less secure."

"And then I am still as much puzzled as ever. I heard, a good while ago, and we all heard that it was to be; and I thought that it was no wonder, I am sure, for I used often to think it was just what was most likely; but afterwards we heard it was no such thing, and from that moment I always believed there had been nothing at all in it."

"I must speak to you, I find, with sincerity; my affairs have long been in strange perplexity: I have not known myself what to expect; one day has perpetually reversed the prospect of another, and my mind has been in a state of uncertainty and disorder, that has kept it—that still keeps it, from comfort and from rest."

"This surprises me indeed, madam! I thought *you* were all happiness! but I was sure you deserved it, and I thought you had it for that reward. And this has been the thing that has made me behave so wrong; for I took it into my head I might tell you everything, because I concluded it could be nothing to you; for if great people loved one another, I always supposed they married directly; poor people, indeed, must stay till they are able to settle; but what in the whole world, thought I, if they like one another, should hinder such a rich lady as Miss Beverley from marrying such a rich gentleman at once?"

Cecilia now, finding there was no longer any chance for concealment, thought it better to give the poor Henrietta at least the gratification of unreserved confidence, which might somewhat sooth her uneasiness by proving her reliance in her faith. She frankly, therefore, confessed to her the whole of her situation. Henrietta wept at the recital with bitterness, thought Mr. Delvile a monster, and Mrs. Delvile herself scarce human; pitied Cecilia with unaffected ten-

derness, and wondered that the person could exist who had the heart to give grief to young Delvile! She thanked her most gratefully for reposing such trust in her; and Cecilia made use of this opportunity, to enforce the necessity of her struggling more seriously to recover her indifferency.

She promised she would not fail; and forbore steadily from that time to name Delvile any more: but the depression of her spirits showed she had suffered a disappointment such as astonished even Cecilia. Though modest and humble, she had conceived hopes the most romantic, and though she denied, even to herself, any expectations from Delvile, she involuntary nourished them with the most sanguine simplicity. To compose and to strengthen her became the whole business of Cecilia; who, during her present suspense, could find no other employment in which she could take any interest.

Mr. Monckton, to whom nothing was unknown that related to Cecilia, was soon informed of Delvile's visit, and hastened, in the utmost alarm, to learn its event. She had now lost all the pleasure she had formerly derived from confiding in him, but though averse and confused, could not withstand his enquiries.

Unlike the tender Henrietta's was his disappointment at this relation, and his rage at such repeated trials was almost more than he could curb. He spared neither the Delviles for their insolence of mutability in rejecting or seeking her at their pleasure, nor herself for her easiness of submission in being thus the dupe of their caprices. The subject was difficult for Cecilia to dilate upon; she wished to clear, as he deserved, Delvile himself from any share in the censure, and she felt hurt and offended at the charge of her own improper readiness; yet shame and pride united in preventing much vindication of either, and she heard almost in silence what with pain she bore to hear at all.

He now saw, with inexpressible disturbance, that whatever was his power to make her uneasy, he had none to make her retract, and that the conditional promise she had given Delvile to be wholly governed by his mother, she was firm in regarding to be as sacred as one made at the altar.

Perceiving this, he dared trust his temper with no further debate; he assumed a momentary calmness for the purpose of taking leave of her, and with pretended good wishes for her happiness, whatever might be her determination, he stifled the reproaches with which his whole heart was swelling, and precipitately left her.

Cecilia, affected by his earnestness, yet perplexed in all her opinions, was glad to be relieved from useless exhortations, and not sorry, in her present uncertainty, that his visit was not repeated.

She neither saw nor heard from Delvile for a week, and augured nothing but evil from such delay. The following letter then came by the post.

To Miss Beverley.

April 2d, 1780.

I MUST write without comments, for I dare not trust myself with making any; I must write without any beginning address, for I know not how you will permit me to address you.

I have lived a life of tumult since last compelled to leave you, and when it may subside, I am still in utter ignorance.

The affecting account of the losses you have suffered through your beneficence to the Harrels, and the explanatory one of the calumnies you have sustained from your kindness to the Belfield's, I related with the plainness which alone I thought necessary to make them felt. I then told the high honour I had received, in meeting with no other repulse to my proposal, than was owing to an inability to accede to it: and informed my mother of the condescending powers with which you had invested her. In conclusion I mentioned my new scheme, and firmly, before I would listen to any opposition, I declared that though wholly to their decision I left the relinquishing my own name or your fortune, I was not only by your generosity more internally yours than ever, but that since again I had ventured, and with permission to apply to you, I should hold myself henceforward unalterably engaged to you.

And so I do, and so I shall! nor, after a renewal so public, will any prohibition but yours have force to keep me from throwing myself at your feet.

My father's answer I will not mention; I would I could forget it! his prejudices are irremediable, his resolutions are inflexible. Who or what has worked him into an animosity so irreclaimable, I cannot conjecture, nor will he tell; but something darkly mysterious has part in his wrath and his injustice.

My mother was much affected by your reference to herself. Words of the sweetest praise broke repeatedly from her; no other such woman, she said, existed; no other such instance could be found of fidelity so exalted! her son must have no heart but for low and mercenary selfishness, if, after a proof of regard so unexampled, he could bear to live without her! O, how did such a sentence from lips so highly reverenced, animate, delight, confirm, and oblige me at once!

The displeasure of my father at this declaration was dreadful; his charges, always as improbable as injurious, now became too horrible for my ears; he disbelieved you had taken up the money for Harrel, he discredited that you visited the Belfields for Henrietta: passion not merely banished his justice, but clouded his reason, and I soon left the room, that at least I might not hear the aspersions he forbid me to answer.

I left not, however, your fame to a weak champion: my mother defended it with all the spirit of truth, and all the confidence of similar virtue! yet they parted without conviction, and so mutually irritated with each other, that they agreed to meet no more.

This was too terrible! and I instantly consolidated my resentment to my father, and my gratitude to my mother, into concessions and supplications to both; I could not, however, succeed; my mother was deeply offended, my father was sternly inexorable: nor here rests the evil of their dissension, for the violence of the conflict has occasioned a return more alarming than ever of the illness of my mother.

All her faith in her recovery is now built upon going abroad; she is earnest to set off immediately; but Dr. Lyster has advised her to make London in her way, and have a consultation of physicians before she departs.

To this she has agreed; and we are now upon the road thither.

Such is, at present, the melancholy state of my affairs. My mother *advised* me to write; forgive me, therefore, that I waited not something more decisive to say. I could prevail upon neither party to meet before the journey; nor could I draw from my father the base fabricator of the calumnies by which he has been thus abused.

Unhappily, I have nothing more to add; and whether intelligence, such as this, or total suspense, would be least irksome, I know not. If my mother bears her journey tolerably well, I have yet one more effort to make; and of that the success or the failure will be instantly communicated to Miss Beverley, by her eternally devoted, but half distracted,

MORTIMER DELVILE.

Scarcely could Cecilia herself decide whether this comfortless letter or none at all were preferable. The implacability of Mr. Delvile was shocking, but his slandering her character was still more intolerable; yet the praises of the mother, and her generous vindication, joined to the invariable reliance of Delvile upon her innocence, conferred upon her an honour that offered some alleviation.

The mention of a fabricator again brought Mr. Monckton to her mind, and not all her unwillingness to think him capable of such treachery, could now root out her suspicions. Delvile's temper, however, she knew was too impetuous to be trusted with this conjecture, and her fear of committing injustice being thus seconded by prudence, she determined to keep to herself doubts that could not without danger be divulged.

She communicated briefly to Henrietta, who looked her earnest curiosity, the continuance of her suspense; and to her own fate Henrietta became somewhat more reconciled, when she saw that no station in life rendered happiness certain or permanent.

CHAPTER VII.

A RELATION.

ANOTHER week past still without any further intelligence. Cecilia was then summoned to the parlour, and to Delvile himself.

He looked hurried and anxious; yet the glow of his face, and the animation of his eyes, immediately declared he at least came not to take leave of her.

"Can you forgive," cried he, "the dismal and unsatisfactory letter I wrote you? I would not disobey you twice in the same manner, and I could not till now have written in any other."

"The consultation with the physicians, then," said Cecilia, "is over?"

"Alas, yes; and the result is most alarming; they all agree my mother is in a dangerous way, and they rather forbear to oppose, than advise her going abroad: but upon that she is earnestly bent, and intends to set out without delay. I shall return to her, therefore, with all speed, and mean not to take any rest till I have seen her."

Cecilia expressed with tenderness her sorrow for Mrs. Delvile: nor were her looks illiberal in including her son in her concern.

"I must hasten," he cried, "to the credentials by which I am authorized for coming, and I must hasten to prove if Miss Beverley has not flattered my mother in her appeal."

He then informed her that Mrs. Delvile, apprehensive for herself, and softened for him by the confession of her danger, which she had extorted from her physicians, had tenderly resolved upon making one final effort for his happiness, and ill and impatient as she was, upon deferring her journey to wait its effect.

Generously, therefore, giving up her own resentment, she wrote to Mr. Delvile in terms of peace and kindness, lamenting their late dissension, and ardently expressing her desire to be reconciled to him before she left England. She told him the uncertainty of her recovery, which had been acknowledged by her physicians, who had declared a calmer

mind was more essential to her than a purer air. She then added, that such serenity was only to be given her by the removal of her anxiety at the comfortless state of her son. She begged him, therefore, to make known the author of Miss Beverley's defamation, assuring him, that upon enquiry, he would find her character and her fame as unsullied as his own; and strongly representing, that after the sacrifice to which she had consented, their son would be utterly dishonourable in thinking of any other connection. She then to this reasoning joined the most earnest supplication, protesting, in her present disordered state of health, her life might pay the forfeiture of her continual uneasiness.

"I held out," she concluded, "while his personal dignity, and the honour of his name and family were endangered; but where interest alone is concerned, and that interest is combated by the peace of his mind, and the delicacy of his word, my opposition is at an end. And though our extensive and well-founded views for a splendid alliance are abolished, you will agree with me hereafter, upon a closer inspection, that the object for whom he relinquishes them, offers in herself the noblest reparation."

Cecilia felt gratified, humbled, animated and depressed at once by this letter, of which Delvile brought her a copy. "And what," cried she, "was the answer?"

"I cannot in decency," he replied, "speak my opinion of it: read it yourself,—and let me hear yours."

To the honourable Mrs. DELVILE.

YOUR extraordinary letter, madam, has extremely surprised me. I had been willing to hope the affair over from the time my disapprobation of it was formally announced. I am sorry you are so much indisposed, but I cannot conclude your health would be restored by my acceding to a plan so derogatory to my house. I disapprove it upon every account, not only of the name and the fortune, but the lady herself. I have reasons more important than those I assign, but they are such as I am bound in honour not to mention. After such a declaration, nobody, I presume, will affront me by asking them. Her defence you have only from herself; her accusation I have received from authority less partial. I command, therefore, that my son, upon pain of my eternal

displeasure, may never speak to me on the subject again, and I hope, madam, from you the same complaisance to my request. I cannot explain myself further, nor is it necessary: it is no news, I flatter myself, to Mortimer Delvile or his mother, that I do nothing without reason, and I believe nothing upon slight grounds.

A few cold compliments concerning her journey, and the re-establishment of her health, concluded the letter.

Cecilia, having read, hastily returned it, and indignantly said, "My opinion, sir, upon this letter, must surely be yours; that we had done wiser, long since, to have spared your mother and ourselves, those vain and fruitless conflicts, which we ought better to have foreseen were liable to such a conclusion. Now, at least, let them be ended, and let us not pursue disgrace wilfully, after suffering from it with so much rigour involuntarily."

"O, no," cried Delvile, "rather let us now spurn it for ever! those conflicts must indeed be ended, but not by a separation still more bitter than all of them."

He then told her, that his mother, highly offended to observe, by the extreme coldness of this letter, the rancour he still nourished for the contest preceding her leaving him, no longer now refused even her separate consent for a measure which she thought her son absolutely engaged to take.

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, much amazed, "this from Mrs. Delvile!—a separate consent!—"

"She has always maintained," he answered, "an independent mind, always judged for herself, and refused all other arbitration: when so impetuously she parted us, my father's will happened to be her's, and thence their concurrence: my father, of a temper immoveable and stern, retains stubbornly the prejudices which once have taken possession of him; my mother, generous as fiery, and noble as proud, is open to conviction, and no sooner convinced, than ingenuous in acknowledging it: and thence their dissention. From my father I may hope forgiveness, but must never expect concession; from my mother I may hope all she ought to grant, for, pardon but her vehemence, and she has every great quality that can dignify human nature!"

Cecilia, whose affection and reverence for Mrs. Delvile

were unfeigned, and who loved in her son this filial enthusiasm, readily concurred with him in praising her, and sincerely esteemed her the first among women.

"Now, then," cried he, with earnestness, "now is the time when your generous admiration of her is put to the test; see what she writes to you;—she has left to me all explanation: but I insisted upon some credential, lest you should believe I only owed her concurrence to a happy dream."

Cecilia, in much trepidation, took the letter, and hastily run it over.

To Miss Beverley.

Misery, my sweet young friend, has long been busy with us all; much have we owed to the clash of different interests, much to that rapacity which to enjoy anything, demands everything, and much to that general perverseness which labours to place happiness in what is withheld. Thus do we struggle on till we can struggle no longer; the felicity with which we trifle, at best is but temporary; and before reason and reflection show its value, sickness and sorrow are commonly become stationary.

Be it yours, my love, and my son's, to profit by the experience, while you pity the errors, of the many who illustrate this truth. Your mutual partiality has been mutually unfortunate, and must always continue so for the interests of both: but how blind is it to wait, in our own peculiar lots, for that perfection of enjoyment we can all see wanting in the lot of others! My expectations for my son had "outstepped the modesty of" probability. I looked for rank and high birth, with the fortune of Cecilia, and Cecilia's rare character. Alas! a new constellation in the heavens might as rationally have been looked for!

My extravagance, however, has been all for his felicity, dearer to me than life,—dearer to me than all things but his own honour! Let us but save that, and then let wealth, ambition, interest, grandeur and pride, since they cannot constitute his happiness, be removed from destroying it. I will no longer play the tyrant, that, weighing good and evil by my own feelings and opinions, insists upon his acting by the notions I have formed, whatever misery they may bring him by opposing all his own.

I leave the kingdom with little reason to expect I shall return to it; I leave it—oh, blindness of vanity and passion!—from the effect of that violence with which so lately I opposed what now I am content to advance! But the extraordinary resignation to which you have agreed, shows your heart so wholly my son's, and so even more than worthy the whole possession of his, that it reflects upon him an honour more bright and more alluring, than any the most illustrious other alliance could now confer.

I would fain see you ere I go, lest I should see you no more; fain ratify by word of mouth the consent that by word of mouth I so absolutely refused! I know not how to come to Suffolk,—is it not possible you can come to London? I am told you leave to me the arbitration of your fate,—in giving you to my son, I best show my sense of such an honour.

Hasten then, my love, to town, that I may see you once more! wait no longer a concurrence thus unjustly withheld, but hasten, that I may bless the daughter I have so often wished to own! that I may entreat her forgiveness for all the pain I have occasioned her, and, committing to her charge the future happiness of my son, fold to my maternal heart the two objects most dear to it!

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia wept over this letter, with tenderness, grief and alarm; but declared, had it even summoned her to follow her abroad, she could not, after reading it, have hesitated in complying.

"O now, then," cried Delvile, "let our long suspenses end! Hear me with the candour my mother has already listened to me—be mine, my Cecilia, at once—and force me not, by eternal scruples, to risk another separation."

"Good heaven, sir!" cried Cecilia, starting, "in such a state as Mrs. Delvile thinks herself, would you have her journey delayed?"

"No, not a moment! I would but ensure you mine, and go with her all over the world!"

"Wild and impossible!—and what is to be done with Mr. Delvile?"

"It is on his account wholly I am thus earnestly precipi-

tate. If I do not by an immediate marriage prevent his further interference, all I have already suffered may again be repeated, and some fresh contest with my mother may occasion another relapse."

Cecilia, who now understood him, ardently protested she would not listen for a moment to any clandestine expedient.

He besought her to be patient; and then anxiously represented to her their peculiar situations. All application to his father he was peremptorily forbid making, all efforts to remove his prejudices their impenetrable mystery prevented; a public marriage, therefore, with such obstacles, would almost irritate him to phrenzy, by its daring defiance of his prohibition and authority.

"Alas!" exclaimed Cecilia, "we can never do right but in parting!"

"Say it not," cried he, "I conjure you! we shall yet live, I hope, to prove the contrary."

"And can you, then," cried she, reproachfully, "oh, Mr. Delvile! can you again urge me to enter your family in secret?"

"I grieve, indeed," he answered, "that your goodness should so severely be tried: yet did you not condescend to commit the arbitration to my mother?"

"True; and I thought her approbation would secure my peace of mind; but how could I have expected Mrs. Delvile's consent to such a scheme?"

"She has merely accorded it from a certainty there is no other resource. Believe me therefore, my whole hope rests upon your present compliance. My father, I am certain, by his letter, will now hear neither petition nor defence; on the contrary, he will only enrage at the temerity of offering to confute him. But when he knows you are his daughter, *his* honour will then be concerned in yours, and it will be as much his desire to have it cleared, as it is now to have it censured."

"Wait at least your return, and let us try what can be done with him."

"Oh, why," cried Delvile, with much earnestness, "must I linger out month after month in this wretched uncertainty! If I wait I am undone! My father, by the orders I must unavoidably leave, will discover the preparations

making without his consent, and he will work upon you in my absence, and compel you to give me up!"

"Are you sure," said she, half smiling, "he would have so much power?"

"I am but too sure, that the least intimation, in his present irritable state of mind, reaching him of my intentions, would make him not scruple, in his fury, pronouncing some malediction upon my disobedience that *neither* of us, I must own, could tranquilly disregard."

This was an argument that came home to Cecilia, whose deliberation upon it, though silent, was evidently not unfavourable.

He then told her, that with respect to settlements, he would instantly have a bond drawn up, similar to that prepared for their former intended union, which should be properly signed and sealed, and by which he would engage himself to make, upon coming to his estate, the same settlement upon her that was made upon his mother.

"And as, instead of keeping up three houses," he continued, "in the manner my father does at present, I mean to put my whole estate *out to nurse*, while we reside for awhile abroad, or in the country, I doubt not but in a very few years we shall be as rich and as easy as we shall desire."

He told her, also, of his well-founded expectations from the relations already mentioned; which the concurrence of his mother with his marriage would thenceforward secure to him.

He then, with more coherence, stated his plan at large. He purposed, without losing a moment, to return to London; he conjured her, in the name of his mother, to set out herself early the next day, that the following evening might be dedicated wholly to Mrs. Delvile: through her intercession he might then hope Cecilia's compliance, and everything on the morning after should be prepared for their union. The long-desired ceremony over, he would instantly ride post to his father, and pay him, at least, the respect of being the first to communicate it. He would then attend his mother to the Continent, and leave the arrangement of everything to his return. "Still, therefore, as a single man," he continued, "I mean to make the journey, and I shall take care, by the time I return, to have all

things in readiness for claiming my sweet bride. Tell me, then, now, if you can reasonably oppose this plan?"

"Indeed," said Cecilia, after some hesitation, "I cannot see the necessity of such violent precipitancy."

"Do you not try me too much," cried Delvile, impatiently, "to talk *now* of precipitancy? after such painful waiting, such wearisome expectation! I ask you not to involve your own affairs in confusion by accompanying me abroad; sweet to me as would be such an indulgence, I would not make a run-away of you in the opinion of the world. All I wish is the secret certainty I cannot be robbed of you, that no cruel machinations may again work our separation, that you are mine, unalterably mine, beyond the power of caprice or ill fortune."

Cecilia made no answer; tortured with irresolution, she knew not upon what to determine.

"We might then, according to the favour or displeasure of my father, settle wholly abroad for the present, or occasionally visit him in England; my mother would be always and openly our friend.—Oh, be firm, then, I conjure you, to the promise you have given her, and deign to be mine on the conditions she prescribes! She will be bound to you for ever by so generous a concession, and even her health may be restored by the cessation of her anxieties. With such a wife, such a mother, what will be wanting for *me!* Could I lament not being richer, I must be rapacious indeed! —Speak, then, my Cecilia! relieve me from the agony of this eternal uncertainty, and tell me your word is invariable as your honour, and tell me my mother gives not her sanction in vain!"

Cecilia sighed deeply, but, after some hesitation, said, "I little knew what I promised, nor know I now what to perform!—there must ever, I find, be some check to human happiness! yet, since upon these terms, Mrs. Delvile herself is content to wish me of her family—"

She stopt; but, urged earnestly by Delvile, added "I must not, I think, withdraw the powers with which I entrusted her."

Delvile, grateful and enchanted, now forgot his haste and his business, and lost every wish but to re-animate her spirits: she compelled him, however, to leave her, that his

visit might less be wondered at, and sent by him a message to Mrs. Delvile, that, wholly relying upon her wisdom, she implicitly submitted to her decree.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ENTERPRISE.

CECILIA now had no time for after-thoughts or anxious repentance, since, notwithstanding the hurry of her spirits and the confusion of her mind, she had too much real business to yield to pensive indulgence.

Averse to all falsehood, she invented none upon this occasion; she merely told her guests she was summoned to London upon an affair of importance; and though she saw their curiosity, not being at liberty to satisfy it with the truth, she attempted not to appease it by fiction, but quietly left it to its common fate, conjecture. She would gladly have made Henrietta the companion of her journey, but Henrietta was the last to whom that journey could give pleasure. She only, therefore, took her maid in the chaise, and, attended by one servant on horseback, at six o'clock the next morning, she quitted her mansion, to enter into an engagement by which soon she was to resign it for ever.

Disinterested as she was, she considered her situation as peculiarly perverse, that from the time of her coming to a fortune which most others regarded as enviable, she had been a stranger to peace, a fruitless seeker of happiness, a dupe to the fraudulent, and a prey to the needy! the little comfort she had received, had been merely from dispensing it, and now only had she any chance of being happy herself, when upon the point of relinquishing what all others built their happiness upon obtaining!

These reflections only gave way to others still more disagreeable; she was now a second time engaged in a transaction she could not approve, and suffering the whole peace of her future life to hang upon an action, dark, private, and imprudent: an action by which the liberal kindness of her late uncle would be annulled, by which the father of her intended

husband would be disobeyed, and which already, in a similar instance, had brought her to affliction and disgrace. These melancholy thoughts haunted her during the whole journey, and though the assurance of Mrs. Delvile's approbation was some relief to her uneasiness, she involuntarily prepared herself for meeting new mortifications, and was tormented with an apprehension that this second attempt made her merit them.

She drove immediately, by the previous direction of Delvile, to a lodging-house in Albemarle-street, which he had taken care to have prepared for her reception. She then sent for a chair, and went to Mrs. Delvile's. Her being seen by the servants of that house was not very important, as their master was soon to be acquainted with the real motive of her journey.

She was shown into a parlour, while Mrs. Delvile was informed of her arrival, and there flown to by Delvile with the most grateful eagerness. Yet she saw in his countenance that all was not well, and heard upon enquiry that his mother was considerably worse.

Extremely shocked by this intelligence, she already began to lament her unfortunate enterprise. Delvile struggled, by exerting his own spirits, to restore her's, but forced gaiety is never exhilarating; and, full of care and anxiety, he was ill able to appear sprightly and easy.

They were soon summoned up stairs into the apartment of Mrs. Delvile, who was lying upon a couch, pale, weak, and much altered. Delvile led the way, saying, "Here, madam, comes one whose sight will bring peace and pleasure to you!"

"This, indeed," cried Mrs. Delvile, half rising and embracing her, "is the form in which they are most welcome to me! virtuous, noble Cecilia! what honour you do my son! with what joy, should I ever recover, shall I assist him in paying the gratitude he owes you!"

Cecilia, grieved at her situation, and affected by her kindness, could only answer with her tears; which, however, were not shed alone; for Delvile's eyes were full, as he passionately exclaimed, "This, this is the sight my heart has thus long desired! the wife of my choice taken to the bosom of the parent I revere! be yet but well, my beloved

mother, and I will be thankful for every calamity that has led to so sweet a conclusion!"

"Content yourself, however, my son with one of us," cried Mrs. Delvile, smiling; "and content yourself, if you can, though your hard lot should make that one this creature of full bloom, health, and youth! Ah, my love," added she, more seriously, and addressing the still weeping Cecilia, "should, now, Mortimer, in losing me, lose those cares by which alone, for some months past, my life has been rendered tolerable, how peaceably shall I resign him to one so able to recompense his filial patience and services!"

This was not a speech to stop the tears of Cecilia, though such warmth of approbation quieted her conscientious scruples. Delvile now earnestly interfered; he told her that his mother had been ordered not to talk or exert herself, and entreated her to be composed, and his mother to be silent.

"Be it *your* business, then," said Mrs. Delvile, more gaily, "to find us entertainment. We will promise to be very still, if you will take that trouble upon yourself."

"I will not," answered he, "be rallied from my purpose; if I cannot entertain, it will be something to weary you, for that may incline you to take rest, which will be answering a better purpose."

"Mortimer," returned she, "is this the ingenuity of duty or of love? and which are you just now thinking of, my health, or a conversation uninterrupted with Miss Beverley?"

"Perhaps a little of both!" said he cheerfully, though colouring.

"But you rather meant it should pass," said Mrs. Delvile, "you were thinking only of me? I have always observed, that where one scheme answers two purposes, the ostensive is never the purpose most at heart."

"Why it is but common prudence," answered Delvile, "to feel our way a little before we mention what we most wish, and so cast the hazard of the refusal upon something rather less important."

"Admirably settled!" cried Mrs. Delvile: "so my rest is but to prove Miss Beverley's disturbance!—Well, it is only anticipating our future way of life, when her distur-

bance, in taking the management of you to herself, will of course prove my rest."

She then quietly reposed herself, and Delvile discoursed with Cecilia upon their future plans, hopes, and actions.

He meant to set off from the church-door to Delvile Castle, to acquaint his father with his marriage, and then to return instantly to London: there he entreated Cecilia to stay with his mother, that, finding them both together, he might not exhaust her patience, by making his parting visit occasion another journey to Suffolk.

But here Cecilia resolutely opposed him; saying, her only chance to escape discovery, was going instantly to her own house; and representing so earnestly her desire that their marriage should be unknown till his return to England, upon a thousand motives of delicacy, propriety, and fearfulness, that the obligation he owed already to a compliance which he saw grew more and more reluctant, restrained him both in gratitude and pity from persecuting her further. Neither would she consent to seeing him in Suffolk; which could but delay his mother's journey, and expose her to unnecessary suspicions; she promised, however, to write to him often, and as, from his mother's weakness, he must travel very slowly, she took a plan of his route, and engaged that he should find a letter from her at every great town.

The bond which he had already had altered, he insisted upon leaving in her own custody, averse to applying to Mr. Monckton, whose behaviour to him had before given him disgust, and in whom Cecilia herself no longer wished to confide. He had again applied to the same lawyer, Mr. Singleton, to give her away; for though to his secrecy he had no tie, he had still less to any entire stranger. Mrs. Delvile was too ill to attend them to church, nor would Delvile have desired from her such absolute defiance of his father.

Cecilia now gave another sigh to her departed friend Mrs. Charlton, whose presence upon this awful occasion would else again have soothed and supported her. She had no female friend in whom she could rely; but feeling a repugnance invincible to being accompanied only by men, she accepted the attendance of Mrs. Delvile's own woman, who

had lived many years in the family, and was high in the favour and confidence of her lady.

The arrangement of these and other articles, with occasional interruptions from Mrs. Delvile, fully employed the evening. Delvile would not trust again to meeting her at the church; but begged her to send out her servants between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, at which time he would himself call for her with a chair.

She went away early, that Mrs. Delvile might go to rest, and it was mutually agreed they should risk no meeting the next day. Delvile conjured them to part with firmness and cheerfulness, and Cecilia, fearing her own emotion, would have retired without bidding her adieu. But Mrs. Delvile, calling after her, said, "Take with you my blessing!" and tenderly embracing her, added, "My son, as my chief nurse, claims a prescriptive right to govern me; but I will break from his control to tell my sweet Cecilia what ease and what delight she has already given to my mind! my best hope of recovery is founded on the pleasure I anticipate in witnessing your mutual happiness: but should my illness prove fatal, and that felicity be denied me, my greatest earthly care is already removed by the security I feel of Mortimer's future peace. Take with you, then, my blessing, for you are become one to me! Long daughter of my affection, now wife of my darling son! love her, Mortimer, as she merits, and cherish her with tenderest gratitude!—Banish, sweetest Cecilia, every apprehension that oppresses you, and receive in Mortimer Delvile a husband that will revere your virtues, and dignify your choice!".

She then embraced her again, and seeing that her heart was too full for speech, suffered her to go without making any answer. Delvile attended her to her chair, scarce less moved than herself, and found only opportunity to entreat her punctuality the next morning.

She had, indeed, no inclination to fail in her appointment, or risk the repetition of scenes so affecting, or situations so alarming. Mrs. Delvile's full approbation somewhat restored to her her own, but nothing could remove the fearful anxiety which still privately tormented her with expectations of another disappointment.

The next morning she arose with the light, and calling

all her courage to her aid, determined to consider this day as decisive of her destiny with regard to Delvile, and, rejoicing that at least all suspense would be over, to support herself with fortitude, be that destiny what it might.

At the appointed time she sent her maid to visit Mrs. Hill, and gave some errands to her man that carried him to a distant part of the town: but she charged them both to return to the lodgings by nine o'clock, at which hour she ordered a chaise for returning into the country.

Delvile, who was impatiently watching for their quitting the house, only waited till they were out of sight to present himself at the door. He was shown into a parlour, where she instantly attended him; and being told that the clergyman, Mr. Singleton, and Mrs. Delvile's woman, were already in the church, she gave him her hand in silence, and he led her to the chair.

The calmness of stifled hope had now taken place in Cecilia of quick sensations and alarm. Occupied with a firm belief she should never be the wife of Delvile, she only waited, with a desperate sort of patience, to see when and by whom she was next to be parted from him.

When they arrived near the church, Delvile stopt the chair. He handed Cecilia out of it, and discharging the chairmen, conducted her into the church. He was surprised himself at her composure, but earnestly wishing it to last, took care not to say to her a word that should make any answer from her necessary.

He gave her, as before, to Mr. Singleton, secretly praying that not, as before, she might be given him in vain: Mrs. Delvile's woman attended her; the clergyman was ready, and they all proceeded to the altar.

The ceremony was begun; Cecilia, rather mechanically than with consciousness, appearing to listen to it: but at the words, *If any man can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together*, Delvile himself shook with terror, lest some concealed person should again answer it; and Cecilia, with a sort of steady dismay in her countenance, cast her eyes round the church, with no other view than that of seeing from what corner the prohibiter would start.

She looked, however, to no purpose; no prohibiter appeared, the ceremony was performed without any interrup-

tion, and she received the thanks of Delvile, and the congratulations of the little set, before the idea which had so strongly preoccupied her imagination was sufficiently removed from it to satisfy her she was really married.

They then went to the vestry, where their business was not long; and Delvile again put Cecilia into a chair, which again he accompanied on foot

Her sensibility now soon returned, though still attended with strangeness, and a sensation of incredulity. But the sight of Delvile at her lodgings, contrary to their agreement, wholly recovered her senses from the stupor which had dulled them. He came, however, but to acknowledge how highly she had obliged him, to see her himself restored to the animation natural to her character, and to give her a million of charges, resulting from anxiety and tenderness. And then, fearing the return of her servants, he quitted her, and set out for Delvile Castle.

The amazement of Cecilia was still unconquerable. To be actually united with Delvile! to be his with the full consent of his mother,—to have him her's, beyond the power of his father,—she could not reconcile it with possibility; she fancied it a dream,—but a dream from which she wished not to awake.

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

A DISCOVERY.

CECILIA'S journey back to the country was as safe and free from interruption as her journey had been to town, and all that distinguished them was what passed in her own mind: the doubts, apprehensions, and desponding suspense which had accompanied her setting out, were now all removed, and certainty, ease, the expectation of happiness, and the cessation of all perplexity, had taken their place. She had nothing left to dread but the inflexibility of Mr. Delvile, and hardly anything even to hope but the recovery of his lady.

Her friends at her return expressed their wonder at her expedition, but their wonder at what occasioned it, though still greater, met no satisfaction. Henrietta rejoiced in her sight, though her absence had been so short; and Cecilia, whose affection with her pity increased, intimated to her the event for which she wished her to prepare herself, and frankly acknowledged she had reason to expect it would soon take place.

Henrietta endeavoured with composure to receive this intelligence, and to return such a mark of confidence, with cheerful congratulations: but her fortitude was unequal to an effort so heroic, and her character was too simple to assume a greatness she felt not: she sighed, and changed colour; and hastily quitted the room that she might sob aloud in another.

Warm-hearted, tender, and susceptible, her affections were all undisguised: struck with the elegance of Delvile, and enchanted by his services to her brother, she had lost

to him her heart, at first without missing it, and, when missed, without seeking to reclaim it. The hopelessness of such a passion she never considered, nor asked herself its end, or scarce suspected its aim; it was pleasant to her at the time, and she looked not to the future, but fed it with visionary schemes, and soothed it with voluntary fancies. Now she knew all was over, she felt the folly she had committed; but though sensibly and candidly angry at her own error, its conviction offered nothing but sorrow to succeed it.

The felicity of Cecilia, whom she loved, admired and revered, she wished with the genuine ardour of zealous sincerity; but that Delvile, the very cause and sole object of her own personal unhappiness, should himself constitute that felicity, was too much for her spirits, and seemed to her mortified mind too cruel in her destiny.

Cecilia, who in the very vehemence of her sorrow saw its innocence, was too just and too noble to be offended by it, or impute to the bad passions of envy or jealousy, the artless regret of an untutored mind. To be penetrated too deeply with the merit of Delvile with her wanted no excuse; and she grieved for her situation with but little mixture of blame, and none of surprise. She redoubled her kindness and caresses with the hope of consoling her, but ventured to trust her no further, till reflection, and her natural good sense, should better enable her to bear an explanation.

Nor was this friendly exertion any longer a hardship to her; the sudden removal, in her own feelings and affairs, of distress and expectation, had now so much lightened her heart, that she could spare without repining, some portion of its spirit to her dejected young friend.

But an incident happened two mornings after which called back, and most unpleasantly, her attention to herself. She was told that Mrs. Matt, the poor woman she had settled in Bury, begged an audience, and upon sending for her up stairs, and desiring to know what she could do for her, "Nothing, madam, just now," she answered, "for I don't come upon my own business, but to tell some news to you, madam. You bid me never take notice of the wedding, that was to be, and I'm sure I never opened my mouth about it from that time to this; but I have found out who it was put a stop to it, and so I come to tell you."

Cecilia, extremely amazed, eagerly desired her to go on.

"Why, madam, I don't know the gentlewoman's name quite right yet, but I can tell you where she lives, for I knew her as soon as I set eyes on her, when I see her at church last Sunday, and I would have followed her home, but she went into a coach, and I could not walk fast enough; but I asked one of the footmen where she lived, and he said at the great house at the Grove: and perhaps, madam, you may know where that is: and then he told me her name, but that I can't just now think of."

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia,—"it could not be Bennet?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's the very name; I know it again now I hear it."

Cecilia then hastily dismissed her, first desiring her not to mention the circumstance to anybody.

Shocked and dismayed, she now saw, but saw with horror, the removal of all her doubts, and the explanation of all her difficulties, in the full and irrefragable discovery of the perfidy of her oldest friend and confidant.

Miss Bennet herself she regarded in the affair as a mere tool, which, though in effect it did the work, was innocent of its mischief, because powerless but in the hand of its employer.

"That employer," cried she, "must be Mr. Monckton! Mr. Monckton, whom so long I have known, who so willingly has been my counsellor, so ably my instructor! in whose integrity I have confided, upon whose friendship I have relied! my succour in all emergencies, my guide in all perplexities!—Mr. Monckton thus dishonourably, thus barbarously to betray me! to turn against me the very confidence I had reposed in his regard for me! and make use of my own trust to furnish the means to injure me!"—

She was now wholly confirmed that he had wronged her with Mr. Delvile; she could not have two enemies so malignant without provocation, and he who so unfeelingly could dissolve a union at the very altar, could alone have the baseness to calumniate her so cruelly.

Evil thoughts thus awakened, stopt not merely [redacted] facts; conjecture carried her further, and conjectu[redacted] upon probability. The officiousness of Morrice i[redacted] her to London, his visiting her when there, and h[redacted]

and watching Delvile, she now reasonably concluded were actions directed by Mr. Monckton, whose house he had but just left, and whose orders, whatever they might be, she was almost certain he would obey. Availing himself, therefore, of the forwardness and suppleness which met in this young man, she doubted not but his intelligence had contributed to acquaint him with her proceedings.

The motive of such deep concerted and accumulated treachery was next to be sought; nor was the search long; one only could have tempted him to schemes so hazardous and costly; and, unsuspicious as she was, she now saw into his whole design.

Long accustomed to regard him as a safe and disinterested old friend, the respect with which, as a child, she had looked up to him, she had insensibly preserved when a woman. That respect had taught her to consider his notice as a favour, and far from suspiciously shunning, she had innocently courted it: and his readiness in advising and tutoring her, his frank and easy friendliness of behaviour, had kept his influence unimpaired, by preventing its secret purpose from being detected.

But now the whole mystery was revealed; his aversion to the Delviles, to which, hitherto, she had attributed all she disapproved in his behaviour, she was convinced must be inadequate to stimulate him to such lengths. That aversion itself was by this late surmise accounted for, and no sooner did it occur to her, than a thousand circumstances confirmed it.

The first among these was the evident ill will of Lady Margaret, which, though she had constantly imputed to the general irascibility for which her character was notorious, she had often wondered to find impenetrable to all endeavours to please or soften her. His care of her fortune, his exhortations against her expenses, his wish to make her live with Mr. Briggs, all contributed to point out the selfishness of his attentions, which in one instance rendered visible, became obvious in every other.

Distinct various as were the incidents that now poured upon memory to his disgrace, not one among them took its his behaviour to herself, which always had been ly circumspect, or if for a moment unguarded,

only at a season when her own distress or confusion had prevented her from perceiving it. This recollection almost staggered her suspicions; yet so absolute seemed the confirmation they received from every other, that her doubt was overpowered, and soon wholly extinguished.

She was yet ruminating upon this subject, when word was brought her that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

Mingled disgust and indignation made her shudder at his name, and without pausing a moment, she sent him word she was engaged, and could not possibly leave her room.

Astonished by such a dismission, he left the house in the utmost confusion. But Cecilia could not endure to see him, after a discovery of such hypocrisy and villainy.

She considered, however, that the matter could not rest here: he would demand an explanation, and perhaps, by his unparalleled address, again contrive to seem innocent, notwithstanding appearances were at present so much against him. Expecting, therefore, some artifice, and determined not to be duped by it, she sent again for the pew-opener, to examine her more strictly.

The woman was out at work in a private family, and could not come till the evening; but, when further questioned, the description she gave of Miss Bennet was too exact to be disputed.

She then desired her to call again the next morning; and sent a servant to the Grove, with her compliments to Miss Bennet, and a request that she might send her carriage for her the next day, at any time she pleased, as she wished much to speak with her.

This message, she was aware, might create some suspicion, and put her upon her guard; but she thought, nevertheless, a sudden meeting with the pew-opener, whom she meant abruptly to confront with her, would baffle the security of any previously settled scheme.

To a conviction such as this even Mr. Monckton must submit, and since he was lost to her as a friend, she might at least save herself the pain of keeping up his acquaintance

CHAPTER II.

AN INTERVIEW.

THE servant did not return till it was dark; and then, with a look of much dismay, said he had been able to meet with nobody who could either give or take a message; that the Grove was all in confusion, and the whole country in an uproar, for Mr. Monckton, just as he arrived, had been brought home dead!

Cecilia screamed with involuntary horror; a pang like remorse seized her mind, with the apprehension she had some share in this catastrophe, and innocent as she was either of his fall or his crimes, she no sooner heard he was no more, than she forgot he had offended her, and reproached herself with severity for the shame to which she meant to expose him the next morning.

Dreadfully disturbed by this horrible incident, she entreated Mrs Harrel and Henrietta to sup by themselves, and going into her own room, determined to write the whole affair to Delville, in a letter she should direct to be left at the post-office for him at Margate.

And here strongly she felt the happiness of being actually his wife; she could now without reserve make him acquainted with all her affairs, and tell to the master of her heart every emotion that entered it.

While engaged in this office, the very action of which quieted her, a letter was brought her from Delvile himself. She received it with gratitude, and opened it with joy; he had promised to write soon, but *so* soon she had thought impossible.

The reading took not much time; the letter contained but the following words:

To Miss Beverley.

[redacted]y Cecilia!

[redacted]one, I conjure you, dismiss everybody, and admit [redacted]oment!

Great was her astonishment at this note! no name to it, no conclusion, the characters indistinct, the writing crooked, the words so few, and those few scarce legible!

He desired to see her, and to see her alone; she could not hesitate in her compliance,—but whom could she dismiss?—her servants, if ordered away, would but be curiously upon the watch,—she could think of no expedient, she was all hurry and amazement.

She asked if any one waited for an answer; the footman said no; that the note was given in by somebody who did not speak, and who ran out of sight the moment he had delivered it.

She could not doubt this was Delvile himself,—Delvile who should now be just returned from the castle to his mother, and whom she had thought not even a letter would reach if directed anywhere nearer than Margate!

All she could devise in obedience to him, was to go and wait for him alone in her dressing-room, giving orders that if any one called they might be immediately brought up to her, as she expected somebody upon business, with whom she must not be interrupted.

This was extremely disagreeable to her; yet, contrary as it was to their agreement, she felt no inclination to reproach Delvile; the abruptness of his note, the evident hand-shaking with which it had been written, the strangeness of the request in a situation such as theirs, all concurred to assure her he came not to her idly, and all led her to apprehend he came to her with evil tidings.

What they might be, she had no time to conjecture; a servant, in a few minutes, opened the dressing-room door, and said, "Ma'am, a gentleman;" and Delville, abruptly entering, shut it himself, in his eagerness to get rid of him.

At his sight, her prognostication of ill became stronger! she went forward to meet him, and he advanced to her smiling and in haste; but that smile did not well do its office; it concealed not a pallid countenance, in which every feature spoke horror; it disguised not an aching heart, which almost visibly throbbed with intolerable emotion! Yet he addressed her in terms of tenderness and peace; but his tremulous voice counteracted his words, and spoke that all within was tumult and war!

Cecilia, amazed, affrighted, had no power to hasten an explanation, which, on his own part, he seemed unable, or fearful to begin. He talked to her of his happiness in again seeing her before he left the kingdom, entreated her to write to him continually, said the same thing two and three times in a breath, began with one subject, and seemed unconscious he wandered presently into another, and asked her questions innumerable about her health, journey, affairs, and ease of mind, without hearing from her any answer, or seeming to miss that she made none.

Cecilia grew dreadfully terrified; something strange and most alarming she was sure must have happened, but what, she had no means to know, nor courage, nor even words to enquire.

Delvile, at length, the first hurry of his spirits abating, became more coherent and considerate: and looking anxiously at her, said, "Why this silence, my Cecilia?"

"I know not!" said she, endeavouring to recover herself, "but your coming was unexpected: I was just writing to you at Margate."

"Write still, then; but direct to Ostend; I shall be quicker than the post; and I would not lose a letter—a line—a word from you, for all the world can offer me!"

"Quicker than the post?" cried Cecilia; "but how can Mrs. Delvile —" she stopt, not knowing what she might venture to ask.

"She is now on the road to Margate; I hope to be there to receive her. I mean but to bid you adieu, and be gone."

Cecilia made no answer; she was more and more astonished, more and more confounded.

"You are thoughtful!" said he, with tenderness; "are you unhappy?—sweetest Cecilia! most excellent of human creatures! if I have made you unhappy—and I must!—it is inevitable! —"

"Oh, Delvile!" cried she, now assuming more courage, "why will you not speak to me openly?—something, I see, is wrong; may I not hear it? may I not tell you, at least, my concern that anything has distressed you?"

"You are too good!" cried he; "to deserve you is not possible,—but to afflict you is inhuman!"

"Why so?" cried she, more cheerfully; "must I not

share the common lot? or expect the whole world to be new modelled, lest I should meet in it anything but happiness!"

"There is not, indeed, much danger! Have you pen and ink here?"

She brought them to him immediately, with paper.

"You have been writing to me, you say?—I will begin a letter myself."

"To me?" cried she.

He made no answer, but took up the pen, and wrote a few words, and then, flinging it down, said, "Fool!—I could have done this without coming!"

"May I look at it?" said she; and, finding he made no opposition, advanced and read,

I fear to alarm you by rash precipitation,—I fear to alarm you by lingering suspense,—but all is not well—

"Fear nothing!" cried she, turning to him with the kindest earnestness; "tell me, whatever it may be!—Am I not your wife? bound by every tie divine and human to share in all your sorrows, if, unhappily, I cannot mitigate them!"

"Since you allow me," cried he, gratefully, "so sweet a claim, a claim to which all others yield, and which if you repent not giving me, will make all others nearly immaterial to me,—I will own to you that all, indeed, is not well! I have been hasty,—you will blame me; I deserve, indeed, to be blamed!—entrusted with your peace and happiness, to suffer rage, resentment, violence, to make me forego what I owed to such a deposit!—If your blame, however, stops short of repentance—but it cannot!"

"What, then," cried she, with warmth, "must you have done? for there is not an action of which I believe you capable, there is not an event which I believe to be possible, that can ever make me repent belonging to you wholly!"

"Generous, condescending Cecilia!" cried he; "words such as these, hung there not upon me an evil the most depressing, would be almost more than I could bear—would make me too blest for mortality!"

"But words such as these," said she, more gaily, "I might long have coquetted ere I had spoken, had you not drawn them from me by this alarm. Take, therefore, the good with the ill, and remember, if all does not go right,

you have now a trusty friend, as willing to be the partner of your serious as your happiest hours."

"Show but as much firmness as you have shown sweetness," cried he, "and I will fear to tell you nothing."

She reiterated her assurances; they then both sat down, and he began his account.

"Immediately from your lodgings I went where I had ordered a chaise, and stopt only to change horses till I reached Delvile Castle. My father saw me with surprise, and received me with coldness. I was compelled by my situation to be abrupt, and told him I came, before I accompanied my mother abroad, to make him acquainted with an affair which I thought myself bound in duty and respect to suffer no one to communicate to him but myself. He then sternly interrupted me, and declared in high terms, that if this affair concerned *you*, he would not listen to it. I attempted to remonstrate upon this injustice, when he passionately broke forth into new and horrible charges against you, affirming that he had them from authority as indisputable as ocular demonstration. I was then certain of some foul play."—

"Foul play indeed!" cried Cecilia, who now knew but too well by whom she had been injured. "Good heaven, how have I been deceived where most I have trusted!"

"I told him," continued Delvile, "some gross imposition had been practised upon him, and earnestly conjured him no longer to conceal from me by whom. This, unfortunately, encreased his rage; imposition, he said, was not so easily played upon him, he left that for *me*, who so readily was duped; while for himself, he had only given credit to a man of much consideration in Suffolk, who had known you from a child, who had solemnly assured him he had repeatedly endeavoured to reclaim you, who had rescued you from the hands of Jews at his own hazard and loss, and who actually showed him bonds acknowledging immense debts, which were signed with your own hand."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Cecilia, "I believed not such guilt and perfidy possible!"

"I was scarce myself," resumed Delvile, "while I heard him: I demanded, even with fierceness, his author, whom I scrupled not to execrate as he deserved; he coldly answered

he was bound by an oath never to reveal him, nor should he repay his honourable attention to his family by a breach of his own word, were it even less formally engaged. I then lost all patience; to mention honour, I cried, was a farce, where such infamous calumnies were listened to;—but let me not shock you unnecessarily, you may readily conjecture what passed."

"Ah me!" cried Cecilia, "you have then quarrelled with your father!"

"I have!" said he; "nor does he yet know I am married: in so much wrath there was no room for narration; I only pledged myself by all I held sacred, never to rest till I had cleared your fame, by the detection of this villainy, and then left him without further explanation."

"Oh, return, then, to him directly!" cried Cecilia; "he is your father, you are bound to bear with his displeasure;—alas! had you never known me, you had never incurred it!"

"Believe me," he answered, "I am ill at case under it. If you wish it, when you have heard me, I will go to him immediately; if not, I will write, and you shall yourself dictate what."

Cecilia thanked him, and begged he would continue his account.

"My first step when I left the castle, was to send a letter to my mother, in which I entreated her to set out as soon as possible for Margate, as I was detained from her unavoidably, and was unwilling my delay should either retard our journey, or oblige her to travel faster. At Margate I hoped to be as soon as herself, if not before her."

"And why," cried Cecilia, "did you not go to town as you had promised, and accompany her?"

"I had business another way. I came hither."

"Directly?"

"No;—but soon."

"Where did you go first?"

"My Cecilia, it is now you must summon your fortitude: I left my father without an explanation on *my* part;—but not till, in his rage of asserting his authority, he had unwarily named his informant."

"Well?"

"That informant—the most deceitful of men!—was your long pretended friend, Mr. Monckton!"

"So I feared!" said Cecilia, whose blood now ran cold through her veins with sudden and new apprehensions.

"I rode to the Grove on hack-horses, and on a full gallop the whole way. I got to him early in the evening. I was shown into his library. I told him my errand.—You look pale, my love! You are not well?—"

Cecilia, too sick for speech, leant her head upon a table. Delvile was going to call for help; but she put her hand upon his arm to stop him, and perceiving she was only mentally affected, he rested, and endeavoured by every possible means to revive her.

After a while, she again raised her head, faintly saying, "I am sorry I interrupted you; but the conclusion I already know,—Mr. Monckton is dead!"

"Not dead," cried he; "dangerously, indeed, wounded, but, thank heaven, not actually dead!"

"Not dead?" cried Cecilia, with recruited strength and spirits, "O, then, all yet may be well!—if he is not dead, he may recover!"

"He may; I hope he will!"

"Now, then," she cried, "tell me all: I can bear any intelligence but of death by human means."

"I meant not to have gone such lengths; far from it; I hold duels in abhorrence, as unjustifiable acts of violence, and savage devices of revenge. I have offended against my own conviction,—but, transported with passion at his infamous charges, I was not master of my reason. I accused him of his perfidy; he denied it; I told him I had it from my father,—he changed the subject to pour abuse upon him; I insisted on a recantation to clear you; he asked by what right? I fiercely answered, by a husband's! His countenance, then, explained at least the motives of his treachery;—he loves you himself! he had probably schemed to keep you free till his wife died, and then concluded his machinations would secure you his own. For this purpose, finding he was in danger of losing you, he was content even to blast your character, rather than suffer you to escape him! But the moment I acknowledged my marriage he grew more furious than myself; and, in short—for why

relate the frenzies of rage? We walked out together; my travelling pistols were already charged; I gave him his choice of them, and, the challenge being mine, for insolence joined with guilt had robbed me of all forbearance, he fired first, but missed me. I then demanded whether he would clear your fame? he called out 'Fire! I will make no terms;'—I did fire,—and unfortunately aimed better! We had neither of us any second, all was the result of immediate passion; but I soon got people to him, and assisted in conveying him home. He was at first believed to be dead, and I was seized by his servants; but he afterwards showed signs of life, and by sending for my friend Biddulph, I was released. Such is the melancholy transaction I came to relate to you, flattering myself it would something less shock you from me than from another: yet my own real concern for the affair, the repentance with which from the moment the wretch fell, I was struck in being his destroyer, and the sorrow, the remorse, rather, which I felt, in coming to wound you with such black, such fearful intelligence,—you to whom all I owe is peace and comfort!——these thoughts gave me so much disturbance, that, in fact, I knew less than any other how to prepare you for such a tale."

He stopt; but Cecilia could say nothing. To censure him now would both be cruel and vain; yet to pretend she was satisfied with his conduct, would be doing violence to her judgment and veracity. She saw, too, that his error had sprung wholly from a generous ardour in her defence, and that his confidence in her character, had resisted, without wavering, every attack that menaced it. For this she felt truly grateful; yet, his quarrel with his father,—the danger of his mother,—his necessary absence,—her own clandestine situation,—and more than all, the threatened death of Mr. Monckton by his hands, were circumstances so full of dread and sadness, she knew not upon which to speak,—how to offer him comfort,—how to assume a countenance that looked able to receive any, or by what means to repress the emotions which so many ways assailed her. Delvile, having vainly waited some reply, then, in a tone the most melancholy, said, "If it is yet possible you can be sufficiently interested in my fate to care what becomes of me, aid me now with your counsel, or rather with your instructions; I am

scarce able to think for myself, and to be thought for by you would yet be a consolation that would give me spirit for anything."

Cecilia, starting from her reverie, repeated, "To care what becomes of you? Oh, Delvile!—make not my heart bleed by words of such unkindness!"

"Forgive me," cried he, "I meant not a reproach; I meant but to state my own consciousness how little I deserve from you. You talked to me of going to my father; do you still wish it?"

"I think so!" cried she, too much disturbed to know what she said, yet fearing again to hurt him by making him wait her answer.

"I will go then," said he, "without doubt, too happy to be guided by you, whichever way I steer. I have now, indeed, much to tell him; but whatever may be his wrath, there is little fear, at this time, that my own temper cannot bear it! What next shall I do?"

"What next?" repeated she; "indeed I know not!"

"Shall I go immediately to Margate? or shall I first ride hither?"

"If you please," said she, much perturbed, and deeply sighing.

"I please nothing but by your direction, to follow that is my only chance of pleasure. Which, then, shall I do?—you will not, now, refuse to direct me?"

"No, certainly, not for the world!"

"Speak to me, then, my love, and tell me;—why are you thus silent?—is it painful to you to counsel me?"

"No, indeed!" said she, putting her hand to her head, "I will speak to you in a few minutes."

"Oh, my Cecilia!" cried he, looking at her with much alarm, "call back your recollection! you know not what you say, you take no interest in what you answer."

"Indeed I do!" said she, sighing deeply, and oppressed beyond the power of thinking, beyond any power but an internal consciousness of wretchedness.

"Sigh not so bitterly," cried he, "if you have any compassion! sigh not so bitterly,—I cannot bear to hear you!"

"I am very sorry indeed!" said she, sighing again, and not seeming sensible she spoke.

"Good heaven!" cried he, rising, "distract me not with this horror!—speak not to me in such broken sentences!—Do you hear me, Cecilia?—why will you not answer me?"

She started and trembled, looked pale and affrighted, and putting both her hands upon her heart, said, "Oh, yes!—but I have an oppression here,—a tightness, a fullness,—I have not room for breath!"

"Oh, beloved of my heart!" cried he, wildly casting himself at her feet, "kill me not with this terror!—call back your faculties,—awake from this dreadful insensibility! tell me at least you know me!—tell me I have not tortured you quite to madness!—sole darling of my affections! my own, my wedded Cecilia!—rescue me from this agony! it is more than I can support!—"

This energy of distress brought back her scattered senses, scarce more stunned by the shock of all this misery, than by the restraint of her feelings in struggling to conceal it. But these passionate exclamations restoring her sensibility, she burst into tears, which happily relieved her mind from the conflict with which it was labouring, and which, not thus effected, might have ended more fatally.

Never had Delvile more rejoiced in her smiles than now in these seasonable tears, which he regarded and blessed as the preservers of her reason. They flowed long without any intermission, his soothing and tenderness but melting her to more sorrow: after awhile, however, the return of her faculties, which at first seemed all consigned over to grief, was manifested by the returning strength of her mind: she blamed herself severely for the little fortitude she had shown, but having now given vent to emotions too forcible to be wholly stifled, she assured him he might depend upon her better courage for the future, and entreated him to consider and settle his affairs.

Not speedily, however, could Delvile himself recover. The torture he had suffered in believing, though only for a few moments, that the terror he had given to Cecilia had affected her intellects, made even a deeper impression upon his imagination than the scene of fury and death which had occasioned that terror: and Cecilia, who now strained every nerve to repair by her firmness the pain which by her

weakness she had given him, was sooner in a condition for reasoning and deliberation than himself.

"Ah, Delvile!" she cried, comprehending what passed within him, "do you allow nothing for surprise? and nothing for the hard conflict of endeavouring to suppress it? do you think me still as unfit to advise with, and as worthless, as feeble a counsellor, as during the first confusion of my mind?"

"Hurry not your tender spirit, I beseech you," cried he, "we have time enough; we will talk about business by and by."

"What time?" cried she, "what is it now o'clock?"

"Good heaven!" cried he, looking at his watch, "already past ten! you must turn me out, my Cecilia, or calumny will still be busy, even though poor Monckton is quiet."

"I *will* turn you out," cried she; "I am indeed most earnest to have you gone. But tell me your plan, and which way you mean to go?"

"That," he answered, "you shall decide for me yourself: whether to Delvile Castle, to finish one tale, and wholly communicate another, or to Margate, to hasten my mother abroad, before the news of this calamity reaches her."

"Go to Margate," cried she, eagerly; "set off this very moment! you can write to your father from Ostend. But continue, I conjure you, on the Continent, till we see if this unhappy man lives, and enquire, of those who can judge, what must follow if he should not!"

"A trial," said he, "must follow; and it will go, I fear, but hardly with me! The challenge was mine; his servants can all witness I went to him, not he to me.—Oh, my Cecilia the rashness of which I have been guilty, is so opposite to my principles, and, all generous as is your silence, I know it so opposite to yours, that never, should his blood be on my hands, wretch as he was, never will my heart be quiet more!"

"He will live, he will live!" cried Cecilia, repressing her horror, "fear nothing, for he will live;—and as to his wound and his sufferings, his perfidy has deserved them. Go, then, to Margate; think only of Mrs. Delvile, and save her, if possible, from hearing what has happened."

"I will go—stay—do which and whatever you bid me:

but, should what I fear come to pass, should my mother continue ill, my father inflexible, should this wretched man die, and should England no longer be a country I shall love to dwell in,—could you, then, bear to own,—would you, then, consent to follow me?—"

"Could I?—am I not yours? may you not command me? Tell me, then,—you have only to say,—shall I accompany you at once?"

Delvile, affected by her generosity, could scarce utter his thanks; yet he did not hesitate in denying to avail himself of it; "No, my Cecilia," he cried, "I am not so selfish. If we have not happier days, we will at least wait for more desperate necessity. With the uncertainty if I have not this man's life to answer for at the hazard of my own, to take my wife—my bride,—from the kingdom I must fly!—to make her a fugitive and an exile in the first publishing that she is mine! No, if I am not a destined alien for life I can never permit it. Nothing less, believe me, shall ever urge my consent to wound the chaste propriety of your character, by making you an eloper with a duellist."

They then again consulted upon their future plans: and concluded that in the present disordered state of their affairs, it would be best not to acknowledge even to Mr. Delvile their marriage, to whom the news of the duel, and Mr. Monckton's danger, would be a blow so severe, that, to add to it any other might half distract him.

To the few people already acquainted with it, Delvile therefore determined to write from Ostend, re-urging his entreaties for their discretion and secresy. Cecilia promised every post to acquaint him how Mr. Monckton went on, and she then besought him to go instantly, that he might out-travel the ill news, to his mother.

He complied, and took leave of her in the tenderest manner, conjuring her to support her spirits, and be careful of her health. "Happiness," said he, "is much in arrears with us, and though my violence may have frightened it away your sweetness and gentleness will yet attract it back: all that for me is in store must be received at your hands,—what is offered in any other way, I shall only mistake for evil! droop not, therefore, my generous Cecilia, but in yourself preserve me!"

"I will not droop," said she; "you will find, I hope, you have not intrusted yourself in ill hands."

"Peace then be with you, my love!—my comforting, my soul-reviving Cecilia! Peace, such as angels give, and such as may drive from your mind the remembrance of this bitter hour!"

He then tore himself away.

Cecilia, who to his blessings could almost, like the tender Belvidera, have exclaimed,

O do not leave me!—stay with me and curse me!

listened to his steps till she could hear them no longer, as if the remaining moments of her life were to be measured by them: but then, remembering the danger both to herself and him of his stay, she endeavoured to rejoice that he was gone, and, but that her mind was in no state for joy, was too rational not to have succeeded.

Grief and horror for what was past, apprehension and suspense for what was to come, so disordered her whole frame, so confused even her intellects, that when not all the assistance of fancy could persuade her she still heard the footsteps of Delvile, she went to the chair upon which he had been seated, and taking possession of it, sat with her arms crossed, silent, quiet, and erect, almost vacant of all thought, yet with a secret idea she was doing something right.

Here she continued till Henrietta came to wish her good night; whose surprise and concern, at the strangeness of her look and attitude, once more recovered her. But terrified herself at this threatened wandering of her reason, and certain she must all night be a stranger to rest, she accepted the affectionate offer of the kind-hearted girl to stay with her, who was too much grieved for her grief to sleep any more than herself.

She told her not what had passed; that, she knew, would be fruitless affliction to her: but she was soothed by her gentleness, and her conversation was some security from the dangerous rambling of her ideas.

Henrietta herself found no little consolation in her own private sorrows, that she was able to give comfort to her beloved Miss Beverley, from whom she had received favours

and kind offices innumerable. She quitted her not night nor day, and in the honest pride of a little power to show the gratefulness of her heart, she felt a pleasure and self-consequence she had never before experienced.

CHAPTER III.

A SUMMONS.

CECILIA'S earliest care, almost at break of day, was to send to the Grove; from thence she heard nothing but evil; Mr. Monckton was still alive, but with little or no hope of recovery, constantly delirious, and talking of Miss Berley, and of her being married to young Delvile.

Cecilia, who knew well this, at least, was no delirium, though shocked that he talked of it, hoped his danger less than was apprehended.

The next day, however, more fatal news was brought her, though not from the quarter she expected it. Mr. Monckton, in one of his raving fits, had sent for Lady Margaret to his bed-side, and used her almost inhumanly: he had railed at age and infirmities with incredible fury, called her the cause of all his sufferings, and accused her as the immediate agent of Lucifer in his present wound and danger. Lady Margaret, whom neither jealousy nor malignity had ever ceased of loving him, was dismayed and affrighted; and in trying out of the room upon his attempting, in his frenzy, to strike her, she dropt down dead in an apoplectic fit.

"Good heaven!" thought Cecilia, "what an exemplary punishment has this man! he loses his hated wife at the very moment when her death could no longer answer his purposes! Poor Lady Margaret! her life has been as bitter as her temper! married from a view of interest, ill used as a wife, happiness, and destroyed from the fruitless ravings of despair!"

She wrote all this intelligence to Ostend, whence she received a letter from Delvile, acquainting her he was detained from proceeding further by the weakness and illness of his

mother, whose sufferings from sea-sickness had almost put an end to her existence.

Thus passed a miserable week; Monckton still merely alive, Delvile detained at Ostend, and Cecilia tortured alike by what was recently passed, actually present, and fearfully expected; when one morning she was told a gentleman upon business desired immediately to speak with her.

She hastily obeyed the summons; the constant image of her own mind, Delvile, being already present to her, and a thousand wild conjectures upon what had brought him back, rapidly occurring to her.

Her expectations, however, were ill answered, for she found an entire stranger; an elderly man, of no pleasant aspect or manners.

She desired to know his business.

"I presume, madam, you are the lady of this house?"

She bowed an assent.

"May I take the liberty, madam, to ask your name?"

"My name, sir?"

"You will do me a favour, madam, by telling it me."

"Is it possible you are come hither without alrea knowing it?"

"I know it only by common report, madam."

"Common report, sir, I believe is seldom wrong in a where to be right is so easy."

"Have you any objection, madam, to telling me name?"

"No, sir; but your business can hardly be very portant, if you are yet to learn whom you are to add It will be time enough, therefore, for us to meet when are elsewhere satisfied in this point."

She would then have left the room.

"I beg, madam," cried the stranger, "you will patience; it is necessary, before I can open my busi that I should hear your name from yourself."

"Well, sir," cried she with some hesitation, "you scarce have come to this house, without knowing th owner is Cecilia Beverley."

"That, madam, is your maiden name."

"My maiden name?" cried she, starting.

"Are you not married, madam?"

"Married, sir?" she repeated, while her cheeks were the colour of scarlet.

"It is properly, therefore, madam, the name of your husband that I mean to ask."

"And by what authority, sir," cried she, equally astonished and offended, "do you make these extraordinary enquiries?"

"I am deputed, madam, to wait upon you by Mr. Eggleston, the next heir to this estate, by your uncle's will, if you die without children, or change your name when you marry. His authority of enquiry, madam, I presume you will allow, and he has vested it in me by a letter of attorney."

Cecilia's distress and confusion were now unspeakable; she knew not what to own or deny, she could not conjecture how she had been betrayed, and she had never made the smallest preparation against such an attack.

"Mr. Eggleston, madam," he continued, "has been pretty credibly informed that you are actually married: he is very desirous, therefore, to know what are your intentions; for your continuing to be called *Miss* Beverley, as if till single, leaves him quite in the dark: but as he is so eeply concerned in the affair, he expects, as a lady of onour, you will deal with him without prevarication."

"This demand, sir," said Cecilia, stammering, "is so tremely—so—little expected—"

"The way, madam, in these cases, is to keep pretty closely the point; are you married or are you not?"

Cecilia, quite confounded, made no answer: to disavow marriage, when thus formally called upon, was every unjustifiable; to acknowledge it, in her present situan, would involve her in difficulties innumerable.

"This is not, madam, a slight thing; Mr. Eggleston has rge family and a small fortune, and that, into the bar, very much encumbered; it cannot, therefore, be exed that he will knowingly connive at cheating himself, ubmitting to your being actually married, and still en- g your estate, though your husband does not take your e."

ecilia, now, summoning more presence of mind, anred, "Mr. Eggleston, sir, has, at least, nothing to fear

from imposition: those with whom he has, or may have any transactions in this affair, are not accustomed to practice it."

"I am far from meaning any offence, madam; my commission from Mr. Eggleston is simply this, to beg you will satisfy him upon what grounds you now evade the will of your late uncle, which, till cleared up, appears a point manifestly to his prejudice."

"Tell him, then, sir, that whatever he wishes to know shall be explained to him in about a week. At present I can give no other answer."

"Very well, madam; he will wait that time, I am sure, for he does not wish to put you to any inconvenience. But when he heard the gentleman was gone abroad without owning his marriage, he thought it high time to take some notice of the matter."

Cecilia, who by this speech found she was every way discovered, was again in the utmost confusion, and with much trepidation said, "Since you seem so well, sir, acquainted with this affair, I should be glad you would inform me by what means you came to the knowledge of it?"

"I heard it, madam, from Mr. Eggleston himself, wh has long known it."

"Long, sir?—impossible! when it is not yet a fortnigh —not ten days, or no more, that ——"

She stopt, recollecting she was making a confession bet deferred.

"That, madam," he answered, "may perhaps bea little contention: for when this business comes to be settl it will be very essential to be exact as to the time, even the very hour; for a large income per annum divides i a small one per diem; and if your husband keeps his o name, you must not only give up your uncle's inherita from the time of relinquishing yours, but refund from very day of your marriage."

"There is not the least doubt of it," answered she; " will the smallest difficulty be made."

"You will please, then, to recollect, madam, that sum is every hour increasing; and has been since last tember, which made half a year accountable for last M Since then there is now added ——"

"Good heaven, sir," cried Cecilia, "what calculation are you making out? do you call last week last September?"

"No, madam; but I call last September the month in which you were married."

"You will find yourself, then, sir, extremely mistaken; nd Mr. Eggleston is preparing himself for much disap- ointment, if he supposes me so long in arrears with him."

"Mr. Eggleston, madam, happens to be well informed of his transaction, as, if there is any dispute in it, you will find. He was your immediate successor in the house to which you went last September in Pall-Mall; the woman who kept it acquainted his servants that the last lady who hired it staid with her but a day, and only came to town, she found, to be married: and hearing, upon enquiry, this lady was Miss Beverley, the servants, well knowing that their master was her conditional heir, told him the circum- stance."

"You will find all this, sir, end in nothing."

"That, madam, as I said before, remains to be proved. a young lady, at eight o'clock in the morning, is seen,— d she was seen, going into a church with a young gen- man, and one female friend; and is afterwards observed come out of it, followed by a clergyman and another per- , supposed to have officiated as father, and is seen get into oach with the same young gentleman, and same female nd, why the circumstances are pretty strong!—"

They may seem so, sir; but all conclusions drawn from n will be erroneous. I was not married then, upon my our."

We have little, madam, to do with professions; the umstances are strong enough to bear a trial, and ——"

A trial! ——"

We have traced, madam, many witnesses able to stand ers particulars; and eight months share of such an as this, is well worth a little trouble."

am amazed, sir! surely Mr. Eggleston never desired o make use of this language to me?"

Mr. Eggleston, madam, has behaved very honourably; h he knew the whole affair so long ago, he was per- d Mr. Delvile had private reasons for a short conceal- and expecting every day when they would be cleared

up by his taking your name, he never interfered: but being now informed he set out last week for the Continent, he has been advised by his friends to claim his rights."

"That claim, sir, he need not fear will be satisfied; and without any occasion for threats of enquiries or law suits."

"The truth, madam, is this; Mr. Eggleston is at presen in a little difficulty about some money matters, whic makes it a point with him of some consequence to have th affair settled speedily: unless you could conveniently com promise the matter, by advancing a particular sum, till i suits you to refund the whole that is due to him, and quit the premises."

"Nothing, sir, is due to him! at, least, nothing worth mentioning. I shall enter into no terms, for I have no compromise to make. As to the premises, I will quit them with all the expedition in my power."

"You will do well, madam; for the truth is, it will not be convenient to him to wait much longer."

He then went away.

"When, next," cried Cecilia, "shall I again be weal vain, blind enough to form any plan with a hope of secresy or enter, with *any* hope, into a clandestine scheme! b trayed by those I have trusted, discovered by those I ha not thought of, exposed to the cruellest alarms, and defe less from the most shocking attacks!—Such has been life I have led since the moment I first consented to a vate engagement!—Ah, Delvile! your mother, in her derness, forgot her dignity, or she would not have concu in an action which to such disgrace made me liable!"

CHAPTER IV.

A DELIBERATION.

IT was necessary, however, not to moralize, but to Cecilia had undertaken to give her answer in a and the artful attorney had drawn from her an ack ledgment of her situation, by which he might claim sooner.

The law-suit with which she was threatened for the arrears of eight months, alarmed her not, though it shocked her, as she was certain she could prove her marriage so much later.

It was easy to perceive that this man had been sent with a view of working from her a confession, and terrifying from her some money; the confession, indeed, in conscience and honesty she could not wholly elude, but she had suffered too often by a facility in parting with money to be there easily duped.

Nothing, however, was more true, than that she now lived upon an estate of which she no longer was the owner, and that all she either spent or received was to be accounted for and returned, since by the will of her uncle, unless her husband took her name, her estate on the very day of her marriage was to be forfeited, and entered upon by the Egglestons. Delvile's plan and hope of secresy had made them little weigh this matter, though this premature discovery so unexpectedly exposed her to their power.

The first thought that occurred to her, was to send an express to Delvile, and desire his instructions how to proceed; but she dreaded his impetuosity of temper, and was most certain that the instant he should hear she was in any uneasiness or perplexity, he would return to her at all hazards, even though Mr. Monckton were dead, and his father herself dying. This step, therefore, she did not dare risk, preferring any personal hardship, to endangering the already precarious life of Mrs. Delvile, or to hasting her son home while Mr. Monckton was in so desperate a situation.

But though what to avoid was easy to settle, what to do was difficult to devise. She had now no Mrs. Charlton to receive her, nor a creature in whom she could confide. To continue her present way of living was deeply involving Delvile in debt, a circumstance she had never considered, in the confusion and hurry attending all their plans and consultations, and a circumstance which, though to him it might have occurred, he could not in common delicacy mention.

But to have quitted her house, and retrenched her expences, would have raised suspicions that must have antici-

pated the discovery she so much wished to have delayed. That wish, by the present danger of its failure, was but more ardent; to have her affairs and situation become publicly known at the present period, she felt would half distract her.—Privately married, parted from her husband at the very moment of their union, a husband by whose hand the apparent friend of her earliest youth was all but killed, whose father had execrated the match, whose mother was now falling a sacrifice to the vehemence with which she had opposed it, and who himself, little short of an exile, knew not yet if, with personal safely, he might return to his native land!

To circumstances so dreadful, she had now the additional shock of being uncertain whether her own house might not be seized, before any other could be prepared for her reception!

Yet still whither to go, what to do, or what to resolve, she was wholly unable to determine; and after meditating almost to madness in the search of some plan or expedient, she was obliged to give over the attempt, and be satisfied with remaining quietly where she was, till she had better news from Delvile of his mother, or better news to send him of Mr. Monckton; carefully, meantime, in all her letters avoiding to alarm him by any hint of her distress.

Yet was she not idle, either from despair or helplessness she found her difficulties increased, and she called for more resolution to combat them: she animated herself by the promise she had made Delvile, and recovering from the sadness to which she had at first given way, she now exerted herself with vigour to perform it as she ought.

She began by making an immediate inspection into her affairs, and endeavouring, where expense seemed unnecessary, to lessen it. She gave Henrietta to understand she feared they must soon part; and so afflicted was the poor happy girl at the news, that she found it the most cruel office she had to execute. The same intimation she gave to Mrs. Harrel, who repined at it more openly, but with a selfishness so evident that it blunted the edge of pity. She then announced to Albany her inability to pursue, at present, their extensive schemes of benevolence; and though he instantly left her, to carry on his laborious plan elsewhere

the reverence she had now excited in him of her character, made him leave her with no sensation but of regret, and readily promise to return when her affairs were settled, or her mind more composed.

These little preparations, which were all she could make, th enquiries after Mr. Monckton, and writing to Delvile, fficiently filled up her time, though her thoughts were by o means confined to them. Day after day passed, and Mr. Monckton continued to linger rather than live; the letters f Delvile, still only dated from Ostend, contained the most melancholy complaints of the illness of his mother; and the ime advanced when her answer would be claimed by the ttorney.

The thought of such another visit was almost intolerable; nd within two days of the time that she expected it, she solved to endeavour herself to prevail with Mr. Eggleston wait longer.

Mr. Eggleston was a gentleman whom she knew little re than by sight; he was no relation to her family, nor l any connection with the Dean, but by being a cousin a lady he had married, and who had left him no dren. The Dean had no particular regard for him, and rather mentioned him in his will as the successor of lia, in case she died unmarried or changed her name, mark that he approved of her doing neither, than as a r he thought probable, if even possible, to turn out in vour.

was a man of a large family, the sons of which, who extravagant and dissipated, had much impaired his e by prevailing with him to pay their debts, and distressed him in his affairs by successfully teasing or money.

ilia, acquainted with these circumstances, knew but ell with what avidity her estate would be seized by , and how little the sons would endure delay, even if ther consented to it. Yet since the sacrifice to which d agreed must soon make it indisputably their own, she ined to deal with them openly; and acknowledged, re, in her letter, her marriage without disguise, but their patience and secresy, and promised, in a short e most honourable retribution and satisfaction.

She sent this letter by a man and horse, Mr. Eggleston's habitation being within fifteen miles of her own.

The answer was from his eldest son, who acquainted her that his father was very ill, and had put all his affairs into the hands of Mr. Carn, his attorney, who was a man great credit, and would see justice done on all sides.

If this answer, which she broke open the instant she to it into her hand, was in itself a cruel disappointment to he how was that disappointment embittered by shame an terror, when, upon again folding it up, she saw it was d rected to Mrs. Mortimer Delvile!

This was a decisive stroke; what they wrote to her, sh was sure they would mention to all others; she saw they were too impatient for her estate to be moved by any repr sentations to a delay, and that their eagerness to publis their right, took from them all consideration of what th might make her suffer. Mr. Eggleston, she found, p mitted himself to be wholly governed by his son; his s was a needy and profligate spendthrift, and by throwi the management of the affair into the hands of an attor craftily meant to shield himself from the future resentm of Delvile, to whom, hereafter, he might affect, at his venience, to disapprove Mr. Carn's behaviour, while Carn was always secure, by averring he only exerted self for the interest of his client.

The discerning Cecilia, though but little experienc business, and wholly unsuspicious by nature, yet saw this management, and doubted not these excuses we ready arranged. She had only, therefore, to save h an actual ejectment, by quitting a house in which sh exposed to such a disgrace.

But still whither to go she knew not! One only at seemed in her power for an honourable asylum, an was more irksomely painful to her than seeking she the meanest retreat: it was applying to Mr. Delvile, s

The action of leaving her house, whether quietly o cibly, could not but instantly authenticate the reports by the Egglestons of her marriage: to hope theref secresy any longer would be folly, and Mr. Delvile's such intelligence might be still greater to hear it by than from herself. She now lamented that Delvile

at once told the tale, but, little foreseeing such a discovery as the present, they had mutually concluded to defer the communication till his return.

Her own anger at the contemptuous ill treatment she had repeatedly met from him, she was now content not merely to suppress but to dismiss, since, as the wife of his son, without his consent, she considered herself no longer as wholly innocent of incurring it.—Yet, such was her dread of his austerity and the arrogance of his reproaches, that, by choice, she would have preferred an habitation with her own pensioner, the pew-opener, to the grandest apartment in Delvile Castle, while he continued its lord.

In her present situation, however, her choice was little to be consulted: the honour of Delvile was concerned in her escaping even temporary disgrace, and nothing, she knew, would so much gratify him, as any attention from her to his father. She wrote to him, therefore, the following letter, which she sent by an express.

To the Hon. Compton Delvile.

Sir,

April 29th, 1780.

I should not, even by letter, presume thus to force myself on your remembrance, did I not think it a duty I now owe your son, both to risk and to bear the displeasure it may unhappily occasion. After such an acknowledgment, further confession would be superfluous; and uncertain as I am if you will ever deign to own me, more words than are necessary would be merely impertinent.

It was the intention of your son, sir, when he left the kingdom, to submit wholly to your arbitration, at his return, which should be resigned, his own name or my fortune—but his request for your decision, and his supplication for your forgiveness, are both, most unfortunately, frustrated, by a premature and unforeseen discovery of our union, which renders an immediate determination unavoidable.

As his distance from him, I cannot, in time, receive his opinions upon the measures I have to take; pardon me therefore, if, well knowing my reference to him will not be more explicit than his own to you, I venture, in the present

important crisis of my affairs, to entreat those commands instantly, by which I am certain of being guided ultimately.

I would commend myself to your favour, but that I dread exciting your resentment. I will detain you; therefore, only to add, that the father of Mr. Mortimer Delvile, wi ever meet the most profound respect from her who, with his permission, dares sign no name to the honour she n has in declaring herself

his most humble,
and most obedient servant.

Her mind was somewhat easier when this letter wa written, because she thought it a duty, yet felt reluctance in performing it.—She wished to have represented to him strongly the danger of Delvile's hearing her distress, b she knew so well his inordinate self-sufficiency, she fear a hint of that sort might be construed into an insult, a concluded her only chance that he would do anything, w by leaving wholly to his own suggestions the weighing a settling what.

But though nothing was more uncertain than whet she should be received at Delvile Castle, nothing was m fixed than that she must quit her own house, since the of Mr. Delvile left not even a chance that his in would conquer it. She deferred not, therefore, any l making preparations for her removal, though wholl settled whither.

Her first, which was also her most painful task, v acquaint Henrietta with her situation: she sent, the to desire to speak with her, but the countenance of rietta showed her communication would not surprise

"What is the matter with my dear Henrietta?" Cecilia; "who is it has already afflicted that kind which I am now compelled to afflict for myself?"

Henrietta, in whom anger appeared to be stru with sorrow, answered, "No, madam, not afflicted f it would be strange if I were, thinking as I think!

"I am glad," said Cecilia, calmly, "if you are n would give to you, were it possible, nothing but and joy."

"Ah, madam!" cried Henrietta, bursting in

"why will you say so when you don't care what becomes of me! when you are going to cast me off!—and when you will soon be too happy ever to think of me more!"

"If I am never happy till then," said Cecilia, "sad, indeed, will be my life! no, my gentlest friend, you will always have your share in my heart; and always, to me, would have been the welcomest guest in my house, but for those unhappy circumstances which make our separating inevitable."

"Yet you suffered me, madam, to hear from anybody that you was married and going away; and all the common servants in the house knew it before me."

"I am amazed!" said Cecilia; "how and which way can they have heard it?"

"The man that went to Mr. Eggleston brought the first news of it, for he said all the servants there talked of nothing else, and that their master was to come and take possession here next Thursday."

Cecilia started at this most unwelcome intelligence: "Yet you envy me," she cried, "Henrietta, though I am forced from my house! though in quitting it, I am unprovided with any other, and though him for whom I relinquish it, is far off, without means of protecting, or power of returning to me!"

"But you are married to him, madam!" cried she, expressively.

"True, my love; but, also, I am parted from him!"

"Oh, how differently," exclaimed Henrietta, "do the great think from the little! were *I* married,—and *so* married, I should want neither house, nor fine clothes, nor riches, nor anything;—I should not care where I lived,—every place would be paradise! I would walk to him barefoot if he were a thousand miles off, and I should mind nobody else in the world while I had him to take care of me!"

"Ah, Delvile!" thought Cecilia, "what powers of fascination are yours! should I be tempted to repine at what I have to bear, I will think of this heroic girl and blush!"

Mrs. Harrel now broke in upon them, eager to be informed of the truth or falsehood of the reports which were buzzed throughout the house. Cecilia briefly related to them both the state of her affairs, earnestly expressing her concern at

the abrupt separation which must take place, and for which she had been unable to prepare them, as the circumstances which led to it had been wholly unforeseen by herself.

Mrs. Harrel listened to the account with much curiosity and surprise; but Henrietta wept incessantly in hearing it; the object of a passion ardent as it was romantic, lost to her past recovery; torn herself, probably for ever, from the best friend she had in the world; and obliged to return thus suddenly to a home she detested,—Henrietta possessed not the fortitude to hear evils such as these, which, to her inexperienced heart, appeared the severest that could be inflicted.

This conversation over, Cecilia sent for her steward, and desired him, with the utmost expedition, to call in all her bills, and instantly to go round to her tenants within twenty miles, and gather in, from those who were able to pay, the arrears now due to her; charging him, however, upon no account, to be urgent with such as seemed distressed.

The bills she had to pay were collected without difficulty; she never owed much, and creditors are seldom hard of access; but the money she hoped to receive fell very short of her expectations, for the indulgence she had shown to her tenants had ill prepared them for so sudden a demand.

CHAPTER V.

A DECISION.

THIS business effectually occupied the present and following day; the third, Cecilia expected her answer from Delvile Castle, and the visit she so much dreaded from the attorney.

The answer arrived first.

To Miss Beverley.

Madam,

As my son has never apprized me of the extraordinary step which your letter intimates, I am too unwilling

believe him capable of so far forgetting what he owes his family, to ratify any such intimation by interfering with my counsel or opinion.

I am, Madam, &c.,
COMPTON DELVILE.

DELVILE-CASTLE,
May 1st, 1780.

Cecilia had little right to be surprised by this letter, and she had not a moment to comment upon it, before the attorney arrived.

"Well, madam," said the man, as he entered the parlour, "Mr. Eggleston has stayed your own time very patiently: he commissions me now to enquire if it is convenient to you to quit the premises."

"No, sir, it is by no means convenient to me; and if Mr. Eggleston will wait some time longer I shall be greatly obliged to him."

"No doubt, madam, but he will, upon proper considerations."

"What, sir, do you call proper?"

"Upon your advancing to him, as I hinted before, an immediate particular sum from what must, by and bye, be legally restituted."

"If this is the condition of his courtesy, I will quit the house without giving him further trouble."

"Just as it suits you, madam. He will be glad to take possession to-morrow or next day."

"You did well, sir, to commend his patience! I shall, however, merely discharge my servants, and settle my accounts, and be ready to make way for him."

"You will not take it amiss, madam, if I remind you that the account with Mr. Eggleston must be the first that is settled."

"If you mean the arrears of this last fortnight or three weeks, I believe I must desire him to wait Mr. Delvile's return, as I may otherwise myself be distressed for ready money."

"That, madam, is not likely, as it is well known you have a fortune that was independent of your late uncle; and as to distress for ready money, it is a plea Mr. Eggleston can urge much more strongly."

"This is being strangely hasty, sir!—so short a time as it is since Mr. Eggleston could expect *any* part of this estate!"

"That, madam, is nothing to the purpose; from the moment it is his, he has as many wants for it as any other gentleman. He desired me, however, to acquaint you, that if you still chose an apartment in this house, till Mr. Delvile returns, you shall have one at your service."

"To be a *guest* in this house, sir," said Cecilia, drily, "might perhaps seem strange to me; I will not, therefore, be so much in his way."

Mr. Carn then informed her, she might put her seal upon whatever she meant hereafter to claim or dispute, and took his leave.

Cecilia now shut herself up in her own room, to meditate without interruption before she would proceed to any action. She felt much inclination to send instantly for some lawyer, but when she considered her peculiar situation, the absence of her husband, the renunciation of his father, the loss of her fortune, and her ignorance upon the subject, she thought it better to rest quiet till Delvile's own fate, and own opinion could be known, than to involve herself in a lawsuit she was so little able to superintend.

In this cruel perplexity of her mind and her affairs, her first thought was to board again with Mrs. Bayley; but that was soon given up, for she felt a repugnance unconquerable to continuing in her native county, when deprived of her fortune, and cast out of her dwelling. Her situation indeed, was singularly unhappy, since, by this unforeseen vicissitude of fortune, she was suddenly, from being an object of envy and admiration, sunk into distress, and threatened with disgrace; from being everywhere caressed and by every voice praised, she blushed to be seen, and expected to be censured; and, from being generally regarded as an example of happiness, and a model of virtue, she was now in one moment to appear to the world, an outcast from her own house, yet received into no other! a bride, unclaimed by a husband! an HEIRESS, dispossessed of all wealth!

To be first acknowledged as *Mrs. Delvile* in a state so degrading, she could not endure; and to escape from it one way alone remained, which was going instantly abroad.

Upon this, therefore, she finally determined; her fo[illegible]

objections to such a step being now wholly, though unpleasantly removed, since she had neither estate nor affairs to demand her stay, and since all hopes of concealment were totally at an end. Her marriage, therefore, and its disgraceful consequences being published to the world, she resolved without delay to seek the only asylum which was proper for her, in the protection of the husband for whom she had given up every other.

She purposed, therefore, to go immediately and privately to London, whence she could best settle her route for the continent: where she hoped to arrive before the news of her distress reached Delvile, whom nothing, she was certain, but her own presence, could keep there for a moment after hearing it.

Thus decided, at length, in her plan, she proceeded to put it in execution with calmness and intrepidity; comforting herself that the conveniencies and indulgencies with which she was now parting, would soon be restored to her, and though not with equal power, with far more satisfaction. She told her steward her design of going the next morning to London, bid him pay instantly all her debts, and discharge all her servants, determining to keep no account open but that with Mr. Eggleston, which he had made so intricate by double and undue demands, that she thought it most prudent and safe to leave him wholly to Delvile.

She then packed up all her papers and letters, and ordered her maid to pack up her clothes.

She next put her own seal upon her cabinets, drawers, and many other things, and employed almost all her servants at once in making complete inventories of what every room contained.

She advised Mrs. Harrel to send without delay for Mr. Arnott, and return to his house. She had first purposed to carry Henrietta home to her mother herself; but another scheme for her now occurred, from which she hoped much more advantage to the amiable and dejected girl.

She knew well, that deep as was at present her despondency, the removal of all possibility of hope, by her knowledge of Delvile's marriage, must awaken her before long to the delusive visions of her romantic fancy; Mr. Arnott himself was in a situation exactly similar, and the

knowledge of the same event would probably be productive of the same effect. When Mrs. Harrel, therefore, began to repine at the solitude to which she was returning, Cecilia proposed to her the society of Henrietta, which, glad to catch at anything that would break into her loneliness, she listened to with pleasure, and seconded by an invitation.

Henrietta, to whom all houses appeared preferable to her own home, joyfully accepted the offer, committing to Cecilia the communication of the change of her abode to Mrs. Belfield.

Cecilia, who in the known and tried honour of Mr. Arnott, would unreluctantly have trusted a sister, was much pleased by this little arrangement, from which, should no good ensue, no evil, at least, was probable. But she hoped, through the mutual pity their mutual melancholy might inspire, that their minds, already not dissimilar, would be softened in favour of each other, and that, in conclusion, each might be happy in receiving the consolation each could give, and a union would take place, in which their reciprocal disappointment might, in time, be nearly forgotten.

There was not, indeed, much promise of such an event in the countenance of Mr. Arnott, when, late at night, he came for his sister, nor in the unbounded sorrow of Henrietta, when the moment of leave-taking arrived. Mr. Arnott looked half dead with the shock his sister's intelligence had given him, and Henrietta's heart, torn asunder between friendship and love, was scarce able to bear a parting, which from Cecilia, she regarded as eternal, added to the consciousness it was occasioned by her going to join Delvile for life!

Cecilia, who both read and pitied these conflicting emotions, was herself extremely hurt by this necessary separation. She tenderly loved Henrietta, she loved her the more for the sympathy of their affections, which called forth the most forcible commiseration,—that which springs from fellow-feeling!

"Farewell," she cried, "my Henrietta, be but happy you are innocent, and be both as I love you, and nothing will your friends have to wish for you, or yourself to regret."

"I must always regret," cried the sobbing Henrietta, "that I cannot live with you for ever! I should regret

if I were queen of all the world, how much more then, when I am nothing and nobody! I do not wish *you* happy, madam, for I think happiness was made on purpose for you, and nobody else ever had it before; I only wish you health and long life, for the sake of those who will be made as happy as you,—for you will spoil them,—as you have spoilt me,—from being ever happy without you!"

Cecilia re-iterated her assurances of a most faithful regard, embraced Mrs. Harrel, spoke words of kindness to the drooping Mr. Arnott, and then parted with them all.

Having still many small matters to settle, and neither company nor appetite, she would eat no supper; but, in passing through the hall, in her way to her own room, she was much surprised to see all her domestics assembled in a body. She stopt to enquire their intention, when they eagerly pressed forward, humbly and earnestly entreating to know why they were discharged?

"For no reason in the world," cried Cecilia, "but because it is at present out of my power to keep you any longer."

"Don't part with *me*, madam, for that," cried one of them, "for I will serve you for nothing!"

"So will I!" cried another, "And I!" "And I!" was echoed by them all; while "No other such mistress is to be found!" "We can never bear any other place!" and "Keep *me*, madam, at least!" was even clamorously urged by each of them.

Cecilia, distressed and flattered at once by their unwillingness to quit her, received this testimony of gratitude for the kind and liberal treatment they had received, with the warmest thanks both for their services and fidelity, and assured them that when again she was settled, all those who should be yet unprovided with places should be preferred in her house before any other claimants.

Having, with difficulty, broken from them, she sent for her own man, Ralph, who had lived with her many years before the death of the Dean, and told him she meant still to continue him in her service. The man heard it with great delight, and promised to re-double his diligence to deserve her favour. She then communicated the same news to her maid, who had also resided with her some years, and by whom with the same, or more, pleasure it was heard.

These and other regulations employed her almost all night; yet late and fatigued as she went to bed, she could not close her eyes: fearful something was left undone, she robbed herself of the short time she had allowed to rest, by incessant meditation upon what yet remained to be executed. She could recollect, however, one only thing that had escaped her vigilance, which was acquainting the pew-opener, and two or three other poor women who had weekly pensions from her, that they must, at least for the present, depend no longer upon her assistance.

Nothing indeed could be more painful to her than giving them such information, yet not to be speedy with it would double the barbarity of their disappointment. She even felt for these poor women, whose loss in her she knew would be irreparable, a compassion that drove from her mind almost every other subject, and determined her, in order to soften to them this misfortune, to communicate it herself, that she might prevent their sinking under it, by reviving them with hopes of her future assistance.

She had ordered at seven o'clock in the morning a hired chaise at the door, and she did not suffer it long to wait for her. She quitted her house with a heart full of care and anxiety, grieving at the necessity of making such a sacrifice, uncertain how it would turn out, and labouring under a thousand perplexities with respect to the measures she ought immediately to take. She passed, when she reached the hall, through a row of weeping domestics, not one of whom with dry eyes could see the house bereft of such a mistress. She spoke to them all with kindness, and as much as was in her power with cheerfulness; but the tone of her voice gave them little reason to think the concern at this journey was all their own.

She ordered her chaise to drive round to the pew-opener's, and thence to the rest of her immediate dependents. She soon, however, regretted that she had given herself this task; the affliction of these poor pensioners was clamorous, was almost heart-breaking; they could live, they said, no longer, they were ruined for ever; they should soon be without bread to eat, and they might cry for help in vain, when their generous, their only benefactress was far away!

Cecilia made the kindest efforts to comfort and encourage them, assuring them the very moment her own affairs were arranged, she would remember them all, visit them herself, and contribute to their relief, with all the power she should have left. Nothing, however, could console them; they clung about her, almost took the horses from the chaise, and conjured her not to desert those who were solely cherished by her bounty!

Nor was this all she had to suffer; the news of her intention to quit the county was now reported throughout the neighbourhood, and had spread the utmost consternation among the poor in general, and the lower class of her own tenants in particular, and the road was soon lined with women and children, wringing their hands and crying. They followed her carriage with supplications that she would return to them, mixing blessings with their lamentations, and prayers for her happiness with the bitterest repinings at their own loss!

Cecilia was extremely affected; her liberal and ever-ready hand was every other instant involuntarily seeking her purse, which her many immediate expenses made her prudence as often check: and now first she felt the capital error she had committed in living constantly to the utmost extent of her income, without ever preparing, though so able to have done it, against any unfortunate contingency.

When she escaped, at last, from receiving any longer this painful tribute to her benevolence, she gave orders to her man to ride forward, and stop at the Grove, that a precise and minute account of Mr. Monckton might be the last, as it was now become the most important news she should hear in Suffolk. This he did, when to her equal surprise and delight, she heard that he was suddenly so much better, there were hopes of his recovery.

Intelligence so joyful made her amends for almost every thing; yet she hesitated not in her plan of going abroad, as she knew not where to be in England, and could not endure to hurry Delvile from his sick mother, by acquainting him with her helpless and distressed situation. But so revived were her spirits by these unexpected tidings, that a gleam of brightest hope once more danced before her eyes, and she felt herself invigorated with fresh courage and new

strength, sufficient to support her through all hardships and fatigues.

Spirits and courage were indeed much wanted for the enterprise she had formed; but little used to travelling, and having never been out of England, she knew nothing of the route but by a general knowledge of geography, which, though it could guide her east or west, could teach her nothing of foreign customs, the preparations necessary for the journey, the impositions she should guard against, nor the various dangers to which she might be exposed, from total ignorance of the country through which she had to pass.

Conscious of these deficiencies for such an undertaking, she deliberated without intermission how to obviate them. Yet, sometimes, when to these hazards, those arising from her youth and sex were added, she was upon the point of relinquishing her scheme, as too perilous for execution, and resolving to continue privately in London till some change happened in her affairs.

But though to everything she could suggest doubts and difficulties arose, she had no friend to consult, nor could devise any means by which they might be terminated. Her maid was her only companion, and Ralph, who had spent almost his whole life in Suffolk, her only guard and attendant. To hire immediately some French servant, used to travelling in his own country, seemed the first step she had to take, and so essential, that no other appeared feasible till it was done.

But where to hear of such a man she could not tell, and to take one not well recommended, would be exposing herself to frauds and dangers innumerable.

Yet, so slow as Delvile travelled, from whom her last letter was still dated Ostend, she thought herself almost certain, could she once reach the Continent, of overtaking him in his route within a day or two of her landing.

The earnest inclination with which this scheme was seconded, made her every moment less willing to forego it.

It seemed the only harbour for her after the storm she had weathered, and the only refuge she could properly seek while thus houseless and helpless. Even were Delvile in England, he had no place at present to offer her, nor could

anything be proposed so unexceptionable as her living with Mrs. Delvile at Nice, till he knew his father's pleasure, and, in a separate journey home, had arranged his affairs either for her return, or her continuance abroad.

With what regret did she now look back to the time when, in a distress such as this, she should have applied for, and received the advice of Mr. Monckton as oracular! The loss of a counsellor so long, so implicitly relied upon, lost to her, also, only by his own interested worthlessness, she felt almost daily, for almost daily some intricacy or embarrassment made her miss his assistance; and though glad, since she found him so undeserving, that she had escaped the snares he had spread for her, she grieved much that she knew no man of honest character and equal abilities, that would care for her sufficiently to supply his place in her confidence.

As she was situated at present, she could think only of Mr. Belfield to whom she could apply for any advice. Nor even to him was the application unexceptionable, the calumnies of Mr. Delvile senior making it disagreeable to her, even to see him. But he was at once a man of the world and a man of honour; he was the friend of Mortimer, whose confidence in him was great, and his own behaviour had uniformly shown a respect far removed from impertinence or vanity, and a mind superior to being led to them by the influence of his gross mother. She had, indeed, when she last quitted his house, determined never to reenter it; but determinations hasty or violent, are rarely observed, because rarely practicable. She had promised Henrietta to inform Mrs. Belfield whither she was gone, and reconcile her to the absence she still hoped to make from home. She concluded, therefore, to go to Portland-Street without delay, and enquire openly and at once whether, and when, she might speak with Mr. Belfield; resolving, if tormented again by any forward insinuations, to rectify all mistakes by acknowledging her marriage.

She gave directions accordingly to the post-boy and Ralph.

With respect to her own lodgings while in town, as money was no longer unimportant to her, she meant from the Belfields to go to the Hills, by whom she might be re-

commended to some reputable and cheap place. To the Belfields, however, though very late when she arrived in town, she went first, unwilling to lose a moment in promoting her scheme of going abroad.

She left her maid in the chaise, and sent Ralph on to Mrs. Hill, with direction to endeavour immediately to procure her a lodging.

CHAPTER VI.

A PARTING.

CECILIA was shown into a parlour, where Mrs. Belfield was very earnestly discoursing with Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins; and Belfield himself, to her great satisfaction, was already there, and reading.

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs. Belfield, "if one does not always see the people one's talking of! Why it was but this morning, madam, I was saying to Mr. Hobson, I wonder, says I, a young lady of such fortunes as Miss Beverley should mope herself up so in the country! Don't you remember it, Mr. Hobson?"

"Yes, madam," answered Mr. Hobson, "but I think, for my part, the young lady's quite in the right to do as she's a-mind; for that's what I call living agreeable: and if I was a young lady to-morrow, with such fine fortunes, and that, it's just what I should do myself: for what I say is this; where's the joy of having a little money, and being a little matter above the world, if one has not one's own will?"

"Ma'am," said Mr. Simkins, who had scarce yet raised his head from the profoundness of his bow upon Cecilia's entrance into the room, "if I may be so free, may I make bold just for to offer you this chair?"

"I called, madam," said Cecilia, seizing the first moment in her power to speak, "in order to acquaint you that your daughter, who is perfectly well, has made a little change in her situation, which she was anxious you should hear from myself."

"Ha! ha! stolen a match upon you, I warrant!" cried the facetious Mr. Hobson; "a good example for you, young lady, and if you take my advice, you won't be long before you follow it: for as to a lady, let her be worth never so much, she's a mere nobody, as one may say, till she can get herself a husband, being she knows nothing of business, and is made to pay for everything through the nose."

"Fie, Mr. Hobson, fie!" said Mr. Simkins, "to talk so slighting of the ladies before their faces! what one says in a corner is quite of another nature; but for to talk so rude in their company,—I thought you would scorn to do such a thing."

"Sir, I don't want to be rude no more than yourself," said Mr. Hobson; "for what I say is, rudeness is a thing that makes nobody agreeable; but I don't see because of that, why a man is not to speak his mind to a lady as well as to a gentleman, provided he does it in a complaisant fashion."

"Mr. Hobson," cried Mrs. Belfield, very impatiently, "you might as well let *me* speak, when the matter is all about my own daughter."

"I ask pardon, ma'am," said he, "I did not mean to stop you; for as to not letting a lady speak, one might as well tell a man in business not to look at the Daily Advertiser; why, it's morally impossible!"

"But sure, madam," cried Mrs. Belfield, "it's no such thing? You can't have got her off already?"

"I would I had!" thought Cecilia; who then explained her meaning; but in talking of Mrs. Harrel, avoided all mention of Mr. Arnott, well foreseeing that to hear such a man existed, and was in the same house with her daughter, would be sufficient authority, to her sanguine expectations, for depending upon a union between them, and reporting it among her friends.

This circumstance being made clear, Cecilia added, "I could by no means have consented voluntarily to parting so soon with Miss Belfield, but that my own affairs call me at present out of the kingdom." And then, addressing herself to Belfield, she enquired if he could recommend to her a trusty foreign servant, who would be hired only for the time she was to spend abroad?

While Belfield was endeavouring to recollect some such person, Mr. Hobson eagerly called out "As to going abroad, madam, to be sure you're to do as you like, for that, as I say, is the soul of everything; but else, I can't say it's a thing I much approve; for my notion is this; here's a fine fortune, got as a man may say, out of the bowels of one's mother country, and this fine fortune, in default of male issue, is obliged to come to female, the law making no proviso to the contrary. Well, this female, going into a strange country, naturally takes with her this fortune, by reason it's the main article she has to depend upon; what's the upshot? why she gets pilfered by a set of sharpers that never saw England in their lives, and that never lose sight of her till she has not a souse in the world. But the hardship of the thing is this; when it's all gone, the lady can come back, but will the money come back?—No, you'll never see it again: now this is what I call being not a true patriot."

"I am quite ashamed for to hear you talk so, Mr. Hobson!" cried Mr. Simkins, affecting to whisper; "to go for to take a person to task at this rate, is behaving quite unbearable; it's enough to make the young lady afraid to speak before you."

"Why, Mr. Simkins," answered Mr. Hobson, "truth is truth, whether one speaks it or not; and that, madam, I dare say, a young lady of your good sense knows as well as myself."

"I think, madam," said Belfield, who waited their silence with great impatience, "that I know just such a man as you will require, and one upon whose honesty I believe you may rely."

"That's more," said Mr. Hobson, "than I would take upon me to say for any *Englishman;* where you may meet with such a *Frenchman*, I won't be bold to say."

"Why indeed," said Mr. Simkins, "if I might take the liberty for to put in, though I don't mean in no shape to go to contradicting the young gentleman, but if I was to make bold to speak my private opinion upon the head, I should be inclinable for to say, that as to putting a dependance upon the French, it's a thing quite dubious how it may turn out."

"I take it as a great favour, ma'am," said Mrs. Belfield, "that you have been so complaisant as to make me this visit to-night, for I was almost afraid you would not have done me the favour any more; for, to be sure, when you was here last, things went a little unlucky: but I had no notion, for my part, who the old gentleman was till after he was gone, when Mr. Hobson told me it was old Mr. Delvile: though, sure enough, I thought it rather upon the extraordinary order, that he should come here into my parlour, and make such a secret of his name, on purpose to ask me questions about my own son."

"Why, I think, indeed, if I may be so free," said Mr. Simkins, "it was rather petickeler of the gentleman; for, to be sure, if he was so over curious to hear about your private concerns, the genteel thing, if I may take the liberty for to differ, would have been for him to say, ma'am, says he, I'm come to ask the favour of you just to let me a little into your son's goings on; and anything, ma'am, you should take a fancy for to ask me upon the return, why I shall be very compliable, ma'am, says he, to giving of you satisfaction."

"I dare say," answered Mrs. Belfield, "he would not have said so much if you'd have gone down on your knees to ask him. Why he was upon the very point of being quite in a passion because I only asked him his name! though what harm that could do him, I'm sure I never could guess. However, as he was so mighty inquisitive about my son, if I had but known who he was in time, I should have made no scruple in the world to ask him if he could not have spoke a few words for him to some of those great people that could have done him some good. But the thing that I believe put him so out of humour, was my being so unlucky as to say, before ever I knew who he was, that I had heard he was not over and above good-natured; for I saw he did not seem much to like it at the time."

"If he had done the generous thing," said Mr. Simkins, "it would have been for him to have made the proffer of his services of his own free-will; and it's rather surpriseable to me he should never have thought of it; for what could be so natural as for him to say, I see, ma'am, says he, you've got a very likely young gentleman here, that's a

little out of cash, says he, so I suppose, ma'am, says he, a place, or a pension, or something in that shape of life, would be no bad compliment, says he."

"But no such good luck as that will come to my share," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I can tell you that, for every thing I want to do goes quite contrary. Who would not have thought such a son as mine, though I say it before his face, could not have made his fortune long ago, living as he did, among all the great folks, and dining at their table just like one of themselves? yet, for all that, you see they let him go on his own way, and think of him no more than of nobody! I'm sure they might be ashamed to show their faces, and so I should tell them at once, if I could but get sight of them."

"I don't mean, ma'am," said Mr. Simkins, "for to be finding fault with what you say, for I would not be unpelite in no shape; but if I might be so free as for to differ a little bit, I must needs say I am rather for going to work in anotherguess sort of a manner; and if I was as you—"

"Mr. Simkins," interrupted Belfield, "we will settle this matter another time." And then, turning to the wearied Cecilia, "The man, madam," he said, "whom I have done myself the honour to recommend to you, I can see to-morrow morning; may I then tell him to wait upon you?"

"I ask pardon for just putting in," cried Mr. Simkins, before Cecilia could answer, and again bowing down to the ground, "but I only mean to say I had no thought for to be impertinent, for as to what I was a going to remark, it was not of no consequence in the least."

"It's a great piece of luck, ma'am," said Mrs. Belfield, "that you should happen to come here of a holiday! If my son had not been at home, I should have been ready to cry for a week: and you might come any day the year through but a Sunday, and not meet with him any more than if he had never a home to come to."

"If Mr. Belfield's home visits are so periodical," said Cecilia, "it must be rather less, than more, difficult to meet with him."

"Why you know, ma'am," answered Mrs. Belfield, "to day is a red-letter day, so that's the reason of it."

"A red-letter day?"

"Good lack, madam, why have not you heard that my son is turned book-keeper?"

Cecilia, much surprised, looked at Belfield, who, colouring very high, and apparently much provoked by his mother's loquacity, said, "had Miss Beverley not heard it even now, madam, I should probably have lost with her no credit."

"You can surely lose none, sir," answered Cecilia, "by an employment too little pleasant to have been undertaken from any but the most laudable motives."

"It is not, madam, the employment," said he, "for which I so much blush as for the person employed—for *myself!* In the beginning of the winter you left me just engaged in another business, a business with which I was madly delighted, and fully persuaded I should be enchanted for ever;—now, again, in the beginning of the summer,—you find me, already, in a new occupation!"

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "but far indeed from surprised, that you found yourself deceived by such sanguine expectations."

"Deceived!" cried he, with energy, "I was bewitched, I was infatuated! common sense was estranged by the seduction of a chimera; my understanding was in a ferment from the ebullition of my imagination! But when this new way of life lost its novelty,—novelty! that short-liv'd, but exquisite bliss! no sooner caught than it vanishes, no sooner tasted than it is gone! which charms but to fly, and comes but to destroy what it leaves behind!—when that was lost, reason, cool, heartless reason, took its place, and teaching me to wonder at the frenzy of my folly, brought me back to the tameness—the sadness of reality!"

"I am sure," cried Mrs. Belfield, "whatever it has brought you back to, it has brought you back to no good! It's a hard case, you must needs think, madam, to a mother, to see a son that might do whatever he would, if he'd only set about it, contenting himself with doing nothing but scribble and scribe one day, and when he gets tired of that, thinking of nothing better than casting up two and two!"

"Why, madam," said Mr. Hobson, "what I have seen of the world is this; there's nothing methodizes a man but business. If he's never so much upon the stilts, that's always a sure way to bring him down, by reason he soon

finds there's nothing to be got by rhodomontading. Let every man be his own carver; but what I say is, them gentlemen that are what one may call geniuses, commonly think nothing of the main chance, till they get a tap on the shoulder with a writ; and a solid lad, that knows three times five is fifteen, will get the better of them in the long-run. But as to arguing with gentlemen of that sort, where's the good of it? You can never bring them to the point, say what you will; all you can get from them, is a farrago of fine words, that you can't understand without a dictionary."

"I am inclinable to think," said Mr. Simkins, "that the young gentleman is rather of opinion to like pleasure better than business; and, to be sure, it's very excusable of him, because it's more agreeabler. And I must needs say, if I may be so free, I'm partly of the young gentleman's mind, for business is a deal more trouble."

"I hope, however," said Cecilia to Belfield, "your present situation is less irksome to you?"

"Any situation, madam, must be less irksome than that which I quitted: to write by rule, to compose by necessity, to make the understanding, nature's first gift, subservient to interest, that meanest offspring of art!—when weary, listless, spiritless, to rack the head for invention, the memory for images, and the fancy for ornament and allusion; and when the mind is wholly occupied by its own affections and affairs, to call forth all its faculties for foreign subjects, uninteresting discussions, or fictitious incident!—— Heavens! what a life of struggle between the head and the heart! how cruel, how unnatural a war between the intellects and the feelings!"

"As to these sort of things," said Mr. Hobson, "I can't say I am much versed in them, by reason they are things I never much studied; but if I was to speak my notion, it is this; the best way to thrive in the world is to get money; but how is it to be got? Why by business: for business is to money what fine words are to a lady, sure road to success. Now I don't mean by this to be censorious upon the ladies, being they have nothing else to go by; for as to examining if a man knows anything of the world, and that, they have nothing whereby to judge, knowing nothing of it themselves. So that when they are taken in by rogues

and sharpers, the fault is all in the law, for making no proviso against their having money in their own hands. Let every one be trusted according to their head-piece: and what I say is this: a lady in them cases is much to be pitied, for she is obligated to take a man upon his own credit, which is tantamount to no credit at all, being, what man will speak an ill word of himself? you may as well expect a bad shilling to cry out don't take me! That's what I say, and that's my way of giving my vote."

Cecilia, quite tired of these interruptions, and impatient to be gone, now said to Belfield, "I should be much obliged to you, sir, if you could send to me the man you speak of to-morrow morning. I wished, also, to consult you with regard to the route I ought to take. My purpose is to go to Nice, and as I am very desirous to travel expeditiously, you may perhaps be able to instruct me what is the best method for me to pursue."

"Come, Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins," cried Mrs. Belfield, with a look of much significance and delight, "suppose you two and I was to walk into the next room? There's no need for us to hear all the young lady may have a mind to say."

"She has nothing to say, madam," cried Cecilia, "that the whole world may not hear. Neither is it my purpose to talk, but to listen, if Mr. Belfield is at leisure to favour me with his advice."

"I must always be at leisure, and always be proud, madam," Belfield began, when Hobson, interrupting him, said, "I ask pardon, sir, for intruding, but I only mean to wish the young lady good night. As to interfering with business, that's not my way, for it's not the right method, by reason——"

"We will listen to your reason, sir," cried Belfield, "some other time; at present we will give you all credit for it unheard."

"Let every man speak his own maxim, sir," cried Hobson; "for that's what I call fair arguing: but as to one person's speaking, and then making an answer for another into the bargain, why it's going to work no-how; you may as well talk to a counter, and think because you make a noise upon it with your own hand, it gives you the reply."

"Why, Mr. Hobson," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I am quite ashamed of you for being so dull! don't you see my son has something to say to the lady that you and I have no business to be meddling with?"

"I'm sure, ma'am, for my part," said Mr. Simkins, "I'm very agreeable to going away; for as to putting the young lady to the blush, it's what I would not do in no shape."

"I only mean," said Mr. Hobson, when he was interrupted by Mrs. Belfield, who, out of all patience, now turned him out of the room by the shoulders, and, pulling Mr. Simkins after, followed herself, and shut the door, though Cecilia, much provoked, desired she would stay, and declared repeatedly that all her business was public.

Belfield, who had looked ready to murder them all during this short scene, now approached Cecilia, and with an air of mingled spirit and respect, said, "I am much grieved, much confounded, madam, that your ears should be offended by speeches so improper to reach them; yet if it is possible I can have the honour of being of any use to you, in me, still, I hope, you feel you may confide. I am too distant from you in situation to apprehend I can form any sinister views in serving you; and, permit me to add, I am too near you in mind, ever to give you the pain of bidding me remember that distance."

Cecilia then, extremely unwilling to shock a sensibility not more generous than jealous, determined to continue her enquiries, and, at the same time, to prevent any further misapprehension, by revealing her actual situation.

"I am sorry, sir," she answered, "to have occasioned this disturbance; Mrs. Belfield, I find, is wholly unacquainted with the circumstance which now carries me abroad, or it would not have happened."—

Here a little noise in the passage interrupting her, she heard Mrs. Belfield, though in a low voice, say, "Hush, sir, hush! you must not come in just now; you've caught me, I confess, rather upon the listening order; but to tell you the truth, I did not know what might be going forward. However, there's no admittance now, I assure you, for my son's upon particular business with a lady, and Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins and I, have all been as good as turned out by them but just now."

Cecilia and Belfield, though they heard this speech with mutual indignation, had no time to mark or express it, as it was answered without in a voice at once loud and furious, "*You*, madam, may be content to listen here; pardon me if I am less humbly disposed!"

And the door was abruptly opened by young Delvile!

Cecilia, who half screamed from excess of astonishment, would scarcely, even by the presence of Belfield and his mother, have been restrained from flying to meet him, had his own aspect invited such a mark of tenderness; but far other was the case. When the door was open, he stopt short with a look half petrified; his feet seeming rooted to the spot upon which they stood.

"I declare I ask pardon, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, "but the interruption was no fault of mine, for the gentleman would come in; and—"

"It is no interruption, madam," cried Belfield, "Mr. Delvile does me nothing but honour."

"I thank you, sir!" said Delvile, trying to recover and come forward, but trembling violently, and speaking with the most frigid coldness.

They were then, for a few instants, all silent; Cecilia, amazed by his arrival, still more amazed by his behaviour, feared to speak lest he meant not, as yet, to avow his marriage, and felt a thousand apprehensions that some new calamity had hurried him home: while Belfield was both hurt by his strangeness, and embarrassed for the sake of Cecilia; and his mother, though wondering at them all, was kept quiet by her son's looks.

Delvile, then, struggling for an appearance of more ease, said, "I seem to have made a general confusion here:—pray, I beg"—

"None at all, sir," said Belfield, and offered a chair to Cecilia.

"No, sir," she answered, in a voice scarce audible, "I was just going." And again rang the bell.

"I fear I hurry you, madam?" cried Delvile, whose whole frame was now shaking with uncontrolable emotion: "you are upon business—I ought to beg your pardon—my entrance, I believe, was unseasonable."—

"Sir!" cried she, looking aghast at this speech.

"I should have been rather surprised," he added, "to have met you here, so late,—so unexpectedly,—so deeply engaged, had I not happened to see your servant in the street, who told me the honour I should be likely to have by coming."

"Good God!—" exclaimed she, involuntarily; but, checking herself as well as she could, she courtsied to Mrs. Belfield, unable to speak to her, and avoiding even to look at Belfield, who respectfully hung back, she hastened out of the room, accompanied by Mrs. Belfield, who again began the most voluble and vulgar apologies for the intrusion she had met with.

Delvile also, after a moment's pause, followed, saying, "Give me leave, madam, to see you to your carriage."

Cecilia then, notwithstanding Mrs. Belfield still kept talking, could no longer refrain saying, "Good heaven, what does all this mean?"

"Rather for *me* is that question," he answered, in such agitation he could not, though he meant it, assist her into the chaise, "for mine, I believe, is the greater surprise!"

"What surprise?" cried she, "explain, I conjure you!"

"By and bye, I will," he answered; "go on, postillion."

"Where, sir?"

"Where you came from, I suppose."

"What, sir, back to Rumford?"

"Rumford!" exclaimed he, with encreasing disorder, "you came then from Suffolk hither?—from Suffolk to this very house?"

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, "come into the chaise, and let me speak, and hear to be understood!"

"Who is that now in it?"

"My maid."

"Your maid?—and she waits for you thus at the door?"—

"What, what is it you mean?"

"Tell the man, madam, whither to go."

"I don't know myself—any where you please—do you order him."

"*I* order him!——you came not hither to receive orders from *me!*——where was it you had purposed to rest?"

"I don't know—I meant to go to Mrs. Hill's—I have no place taken."

"No place taken!" repeated he, in a voice faltering between passion and grief; "you purposed, then, to stay here?—I have perhaps driven you away?"

"Here!" cried Cecilia, mingling, in her turn, indignation with surprise, "gracious heaven! what is it you mean to doubt?"

"Nothing!" cried he, with emphasis, "I never *have* had, I never *will* have a doubt! I will *know*, I will have *conviction* for everything! Postillion, drive to St. James's-square!—to Mr. Delvile's. There, madam, I will wait upon you."

"No! stay, postillion!" called out Cecilia, seized with terror inexpressible; "let me get out, let me speak to you at once!"

"It cannot be; I will follow you in a few minutes——drive on, postillion!"

"No, no!—I will not go—I dare not leave you—unkind Delvile!——what is it you suspect?"

"Cecilia," cried he, putting his hand upon the chaise-door; "I have ever believed you spotless as an angel! and, by heaven, I believe you so still, in spite of appearances—in defiance of everything!——Now then be satisfied;—I will be with you very soon.—Meanwhile, take this letter, I was just going to send to you.—Postillion, drive on, or be it at your peril!"

The man waited no further orders, nor regarded the prohibition of Cecilia, who called out to him without ceasing; but he would not listen to her till he got to the end of the street; he then stopt, and she broke the seal of her letter, and read, by the light of the lamps, enough to let her know that Delvile had written it upon the road from Dover to London, to acquaint her his mother was now better, and had taken pity of his suspense and impatience, and insisted upon his coming privately to England, to satisfy himself fully about Mr. Monckton, communicate his marriage to his father, and give those orders towards preparing for its being made public, which his unhappy precipitation in leaving the kingdom had prevented.

This letter, which, though written but a few hours before she received it, was full of tenderness, gratitude, and anxiety for her happiness, instantly convinced her that his strange behaviour had been wholly the effect of a sudden

impulse of jealousy; excited by so unexpectedly finding her in town, at the very house where his father had assured him she had an improper connection, and alone, so suspiciously, with the young man affirmed to be her favourite. He knew nothing of the ejectment, nothing of any reason for her leaving Suffolk, everything had the semblance of no motive but to indulge a private and criminal inclination.

These thoughts, which confusedly, yet forcibly, rushed upon her mind, brought with them at once an excuse for his conduct, and an alarm for his danger; "He must think," she cried, "I came to town only to meet Mr. Belfield!" Then, opening the chaise-door herself, she jumpt out, and ran back into Portland-street, too impatient to argue with the postillion to return with her, and stopt not till she came to Mrs. Belfield's house.

She knocked at the door with violence; Mrs. Belfield came to it herself; "Where," cried she, hastily entering as she spoke, "are the gentlemen?"

"Lack-a-day! ma'am," answered Mrs. Belfield, "they are both gone out."

"Gone out?—where to?—which way?"

"I am sure I can't tell, ma'am, no more than you can; but I am sadly afraid they'll have a quarrel before they've done."

"Oh, heaven!" cried Cecilia, who now doubted not a second duel. "Tell me, show me, which way they went!"

"Why, ma'am, to let you into the secret," answered Mrs. Belfield, "only I beg you'll take no notice of it to my son, but, seeing them so much out of sorts, I begged the favour of Mr. Simkins, as Mr. Hobson was gone out to his club, just to follow them, and see what they were after."

Cecilia was much rejoiced this caution had been taken, and determined to wait his return. She would have sent for the chaise to follow her, but Mrs. Belfield kept no servant, and the maid of the house was employed in preparing the supper.

When Mr. Simkins came back, she learnt, after various interruptions from Mrs. Belfield, and much delay from his own slowness and circumlocution, that he had pursued the two gentlemen to the * * * * coffee-house.

She hesitated not a moment in resolving to follow them:

she feared the failure of any commission, nor did she know whom to entrust with one: and the danger was too urgent for much deliberation. She begged, therefore, that Mr. Simkins would walk with her to the chaise; but hearing that the coffee-house was another way, she desired Mrs. Belfield to let the servant run and order it to Mrs. Roberts's, in Fetter-lane, and then eagerly requested Mr. Simkins to accompany her on foot till they met with a hackney-coach.

They then set out, Mr. Simkins feeling proud and happy in being allowed to attend her, while Cecilia, glad of any protection, accepted his offer of continuing with her, even after she met with a hackney-coach.

When she arrived at the coffee-house, she ordered the coachman to desire the master of it to come and speak with her.

He came, and she hastily called out, "Pray are two gentlemen here?"

"Here are several gentlemen here, madam."

"Yes, yes,—but are two upon any business—any particular business—"

"Two gentlemen, madam, came about half an hour ago, and asked for a room to themselves."

"And where are they now?—are they up stairs?—down stairs?—where are they?"

"One of them went away in about ten minutes, and the other soon after."

Bitterly chagrined and disappointed, she knew not what step to take next; but, after some consideration, concluded upon obeying Delvile's own directions, and proceeding to St. James's-square, where alone, now, she seemed to have any chance of meeting with him. Gladly, however, she still consented to be accompanied by Mr. Simkins, for her dread of being alone, at so late an hour, in a hackney-coach, was invincible. Whether Delvile himself had any authority for directing her to his father's, or whether, in the perturbation of his new-excited and agonizing sensations of jealousy, he had forgotten that any authority was necessary, she knew not; nor could she now interest herself in the doubt: a second scene, such as had so lately passed with Mr. Monckton, occupied all her thoughts. She

knew the too great probability that the high spirit of Belfield would disdain making the explanation which Delvile in his present agitation might require, and the consequence of such a refusal must almost inevitably be fatal.

CHAPTER VII.

A PURSUIT.

THE moment the porter came to the door, Cecilia eagerly called out from the coach, "Is Mr. Delvile here?"

"Yes, madam," he answered, "but I believe he is engaged."

"Oh, no matter for any engagement!" cried she, "open the door,—I must speak to him this moment!"

"If you will please to step into the parlour, madam, I will tell his gentleman you are here; but he will be much displeased if he is disturbed without notice."

"Ah, heaven!" exclaimed she, "what Mr. Delvile are you talking of?"

"My master, madam."

Cecilia, who had got out of the coach, now hastily returned to it, and was some time in too great agony to answer either the porter, who desired some message, or the coachman, who asked whither he was to drive. To see Mr. Delvile, unprotected by his son, and contrary to his orders, appeared to her insupportable; yet to what place could she go? where was she likely to meet with Delvile? how could he find her if she went to Mrs. Hill's? and in what other house could she at present claim admittance?

After a little recovering from this cruel shock, she ventured, though in a faltering voice, to enquire whether young Mr. Delvile had been there?

"Yes, madam," the porter answered; "we thought he was abroad, but he called just now, and asked if any lady had been at the house. He would not even stay to go up to my master, and we have not dared tell him of his arrival."

This a little revived her; to hear that he had actually

been enquiring for her, at least assured her of his safety from any immediate violence, and she began to hope she might now possibly meet with him time enough to explain all that had passed in his absence, and occasioned her seemingly strange and suspicious situation at Belfield's. She compelled herself, therefore, to summon courage for seeing his father, since, as he had directed her to the house, she concluded he would return there to seek her, when he had wandered elsewhere to no purpose.

She then, though with much timidity and reluctance, sent a message to Mr. Delvile to entreat a moment's audience.

An answer was brought her that he saw no company so late at night.

Losing now all dread of his reproaches, in her superior dread of missing Delvile, she called out earnestly to the man, "Tell him, sir, I beseech him not to refuse me! tell him I have something to communicate that requires his immediate attention!"

The servant obeyed; but soon returning, said his master desired him to acquaint her he was engaged every moment he stayed in town, and must positively decline seeing her.

"Go to him again," cried the harassed Cecilia, "assure him I come not from myself, but by the desire of one he most values: tell him I entreat but permission to wait an hour in his house, and that I have no other place in the world whither I can go!"

Mr. Delvile's own gentleman brought, with evident concern, the answer to this petition; which was, that while the Honourable Mr. Delvile was himself alive, he thought the desire of any other person concerning his house, was taking with him a very extraordinary liberty; and that he was now going to bed, and had given orders to his servants to carry him no more messages whatsoever, upon pain of instant dismission.

Cecilia now seemed totally destitute of all resource, and for a few dreadful minutes, gave herself up to utter despondency: nor, when she recovered her presence of mind, could she form any better plan than that of waiting in the coach to watch the return of Delvile.

She told the coachman, therefore, to drive to a corner of

the square, begging Mr. Simkins to have patience, which he promised with much readiness, and endeavoured to give her comfort, by talking without cessation.

She waited here near half an hour. She then feared the disappointment of Delvile in not meeting her at first, had made him conclude she meant not to obey his directions, and had perhaps urged him to call again upon Belfield, whom he might fancy privy to her non-appearance. This was new horror to her, and she resolved at all risks to drive to Portland-street, and enquire if Belfield himself was returned home. Yet, lest they should mutually be pursuing each other all night, she stopt again at Mr. Delvile's, and left word with the porter, that if young Mr. Delvile should come home, he would hear of the person he was enquiring for at Mrs. Roberts's in Fetter-lane. To Belfield's she did not dare to direct him; and it was her intention, if there she procured no new intelligence, to leave the same message, and then go to Mrs. Roberts without further delay. To make such an arrangement with a servant who knew not her connection with his young master, was extremely repugnant to her; but the exigence was too urgent for scruples, and there was nothing to which she would not have consented, to prevent the fatal catastrophe she apprehended.

When she came to Belfield's, not daring to enter the house, she sent in Mr. Simkins, to desire that Mrs. Belfield would be so good as to step to the coach door.

"Is your son, madam," she cried, eagerly, "come home? and is anybody with him?"

"No, ma'am; he has never once been across the threshold since that gentleman took him out; and I am half out of my wits to think—"

"Has that gentleman," interrupted Cecilia, "been here any more?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's what I was going to tell you; he came again just now, and said—"

"Just now?—good heaven!—and which way is he gone?"

"Why he is after no good, I am afraid, for he was in a great passion, and would hardly hear anything I said."

"Pray, pray answer me quick!—where, which way did he go?"

"Why, he asked me if I knew whether my son was come from the * * coffee-house; why, says I, I'm sure I can't tell, for if it had not been for Mr. Simkins, I should not so much as have known he ever went to the * * coffee-house; however, I hope he a'n't come away, because if he is, poor Miss Beverley will have had all that trouble for nothing; for she's gone after him in a prodigious hurry; and upon my only saying that, he seemed quite beside himself, and said, if I don't meet with your son at the * * coffee-house myself, pray, when he comes in, tell him I shall be highly obliged to him to call there; and then he went away, in as great a pet as ever you saw."

Cecilia listened to this account with the utmost terror and misery; the suspicions of Delvile would now be aggravated, and the message he had left for Belfield would by him be regarded as a defiance. Again, however, to the * * coffee-house she instantly ordered the coach, an immediate explanation from herself seeming the only possible chance for preventing the most horrible conclusion to this unfortunate and eventful evening.

She was still accompanied by Mr. Simkins, and, but that she attended to nothing he said, would not inconsiderably have been tormented by his conversation. She sent him immediately into the coffee-room, to enquire if either of the gentlemen were then in the house.

He returned to her with a waiter, who said, "One of them, madam, called again just now, but he only stopt to write a note, which he left to be given to the gentleman who came with him at first. He is but this moment gone, and I don't think he can be at the bottom of the street."

"Oh, drive, then, gallop after him!"—cried Cecilia; "coachman! go this moment!"

"My horses are tired," said the man, "they have been out all day, and they will gallop no further, if I don't stop and give them a drink."

Cecilia, too full both of hope and impatience for this delay, forced open the door herself, and without saying another word, jumped out of the carriage, with intention to run down the street; but the coachman immediately seizing her, protested she should not stir till he was paid.

In the utmost agony of mind at an hindrance by which

she imagined Delvile would be lost to her perhaps for ever, she put her hand in her pocket, in order to give up her purse for her liberty; but Mr. Simkins, who was making a tiresome expostulation with the coachman, took it himself, and, declaring he would not see the lady cheated, began a tedious calculation of his fare.

"O pay him anything!" cried she, "and let us begone! an instant's delay may be fatal!"

Mr. Simkins, too earnest to conquer the coachman to attend to her distress, continued his prolix harangue concerning a disputed shilling, appealing to some gathering spectators upon the justice of his cause; while his adversary, who was far from sober, still held Cecilia, saying the coach had been hired for the lady, and he would be paid by herself.

"Good God!" cried the agitated Cecilia,—"give him my purse at once!—give him everything he desires!"—

The coachman, at this permission, encreased his demands, and Mr. Simkins, taking the number of his coach, protested he would summon him to the Court of Conscience the next morning. A gentleman, who then came out of the coffee-house, offered to assist the lady, but the coachman, who still held her arm, swore he would have his right.

"Let me go! let me pass!" cried she, with encreasing eagerness and emotion; "detain me at your peril!—release me this moment!—only let me run to the end of the street,—good God! good heaven! detain me not for mercy!"

Mr. Simkins, humbly desiring her not to be in haste, began a formal apology for his conduct; but the inebriety of the coachman became evident; a mob was collecting; Cecilia, breathless with vehemence and terror, was encircled, yet struggled in vain to break away; and the stranger gentleman, protesting, with sundry compliments, he would himself take care of her, very freely seized her hand.

This moment, for the unhappy Cecilia, teemed with calamity; she was wholly overpowered; terror for Delvile, horror for herself, hurry, confusion, heat and fatigue, all assailing her at once, while all means of repelling them were denied her, the attack was too strong for her fears, feelings, and faculties, and her reason suddenly, yet totally

failing her, she madly called out, "He will be gone! he will be gone! and I must follow him to Nice!"

The gentleman now retreated; but Mr. Simkins, who was talking to the mob, did not hear her; and the coachman, too much intoxicated to perceive her rising frenzy, persisted in detaining her.

"I am going to France!" cried she, still more wildly, "why do you stop me? he will die if I do not see him, he will bleed to death!"

The coachman, still unmoved, began to grow very abusive; but the stranger, touched by compassion, gave up his attempted gallantry, and Mr. Simkins, much astonished, entreated her not to be frightened: she was, however, in no condition to listen to him; with a strength hitherto unknown to her, she forcibly disengaged herself from her persecutors; yet her senses were wholly disordered; she forgot her situation, her intention, and herself; the single idea of Delvile's danger took sole possession of her brain, though all connection with its occasion was lost, and the moment she was released, she fervently clasped her hands, exclaiming, "I will yet heal his wound, even at the hazard of my life!" and springing forward, was almost instantly out of sight.

Mr. Simkins, now much alarmed, and earnestly calling after her, entered into a compromise with the coachman, that he might attend her; but the length of his negociation defeated its purpose, and before he was at liberty to follow her, all trace was lost by which he might have overtaken her. He stopt every passenger he met to make enquiries, but though they led him on some way, they led him on in vain; and, after a useless and ill-managed pursuit, he went quietly to his own home, determining to acquaint Mrs. Belfield with what had happened the next morning.

Meanwhile the frantic Cecilia escaped both pursuit and insult by the velocity of her own motion. She called aloud upon Delvile as she flew to the end of the street. No Delvile was there!—she turned the corner; yet saw nothing of him; she still went on, though unknowing whither, the distraction of her mind every instant growing greater, from the inflammation of fatigue, heat, and disappointment. She was spoken to repeatedly; she was even caught once or twice by her riding habit; but she forced herself along by

her own vehement rapidity, not hearing what was said, not heeding what was thought. Delvile, bleeding by the arm of Belfield, was the image before her eyes, and took such full possession of her senses, that still, as she ran on, she fancied it in view. She scarce touched the ground; she scarce felt her own motion; she seemed as if endued with supernatural speed, gliding from place to place, from street to street, with no consciousness of any plan, and following no other direction than that of darting forward wherever there was most room, and turning back when she met with any obstruction; till, quite spent and exhausted, she abruptly ran into a yet open shop, where, breathless and panting, she sunk upon the floor, and, with a look disconsolate and helpless, sat for some time without speaking.

The people of the house, concluding at first she was a woman of the town, were going roughly to turn her out; but soon seeing their mistake, by the evident distraction of her air and manner, they enquired of some idle people who, late as it was, had followed her, if any of them knew who she was, or whence she came?

They could give no account of her, but supposed she was broke loose from Bedlam.

Cecilia, then, wildly starting up, exclaimed, "No, no,—I am not mad,—I am going to Nice—to my husband!"

"She's quite crazy," said the man of the house, who was a pawn-broker; "we had better get rid of her before she grows mischievous."

"She's somebody broke out from a private mad-house, I dare say," said a man who had followed her into the shop; "and if you were to take care of her a little while, ten to one but you'll get a reward for it."

"She's a gentlewoman, sure enough," said the mistress of the house, "because she's got such good things on."

And then, under pretence of trying to find some direction to her upon a letter, or paper, she insisted upon searching her pockets: here, however, she was disappointed in her expectations: her purse was in the custody of Mr. Simkins, but neither her terror nor distress had saved her from the daring dexterity of villany, and her pockets, in the mob, had been rifled of whatever else they contained. The woman therefore hesitated some time whether to take charge

of her or not: but being urged by the man who made the proposal, and who said they might depend upon seeing her soon advertised, as having escaped from her keepers, they ventured to undertake her.

Mean while she endeavoured again to get out, calling aloud upon Delvile to rescue her, but so wholly bereft of sense and recollection, she could give no account who she was, whence she came, or whither she wished to go.

They then carried her up stairs, and attempted to make her lie down upon a bed; but supposing she refused because it was not of straw they desisted, and, taking away the candle, locked the door, and all went to rest.

In this miserable condition, alone and raving, she was left to pass the night! In the early part of it, she called upon Delvile without intermission, beseeching him to come to her defence in one moment, and deploring his death the next; but afterwards, her strength being wholly exhausted by these various exertions and fatigues, she threw herself upon the floor, and lay for some minutes quite still. Her head then began to grow cooler, as the fever into which terror and immoderate exercise had thrown her abated, and her memory recovered its functions.

This was, however, only a circumstance of horror to her: she found herself shut up in a place of confinement, without light, without knowledge where she was, and not a human being near her!

Yet the same returning reason which enabled her to take this view of her own situation, brought also to her mind that in which she had left Delvile;—under all the perturbation of new-kindled jealousy, just calling upon Belfield, —Belfield, tenacious of his honour even more than himself, —to satisfy doubts, of which the very mention would be received as a challenge!

"Oh, yet, oh, yet," cried she, "let me fly and overtake them!—I may find them before morning, and to night it must surely have been too late for this work of death!"

She then arose to feel for the door, and succeeded; but it was locked, and no effort she could make enabled her to open it.

Her agony was unspeakable; she called out with violence upon the people of the house, conjured them to set her

at liberty, offered any reward for their assistance, and threatened them with a prosecution if detained.

Nobody, however, came near her: some slept on notwithstanding all the disturbance she could make, and others, though awakened by her cries, concluded them the ravings of a mad woman, and listened not to what she said.

Her head was by no means in a condition to bear this violence of distress; every pulse was throbbing, every vein seemed bursting, her reason so lately returned, could not bear the repetition of such a shock, and from supplicating for help with all the energy of feeling and understanding, she soon continued the cry from mere vehemence of distraction.

Thus dreadfully passed the night; and in the morning, when the woman of the house came to see after her, she found her raving with such frenzy and desperation, that her conscience was perfectly at ease in the treatment she had given her, being now firmly satisfied she required the strictest confinement.

She still, however, tried to get away; talked of Delvile without cessation, said she should be too late to serve him; told the woman she desired but to prevent murder, and repeatedly called out, "Oh, beloved of my heart! wait but a moment, and I will snatch thee from destruction!"

Mrs. Wyers, this woman, now sought no longer to draw from her whence she came, or who she was, but heard her frantic exclamations without any emotion, contentedly concluding that her madness was incurable: and though she was in a high fever, refused all sustenance, and had every symptom of an alarming and dangerous malady, she was fully persuaded that her case was that of decided insanity, and had not any notion of temporary or accidental alienation of reason.

All she could think of by way of indulgence to her, was to bring her a quantity of straw, having heard that mad people were fond of it; and putting it in a heap in one corner of the room, she expected to see her eagerly fly to it.

Cecilia, however, distracted as she was, was eager for nothing, but to escape, which was constantly her aim, alike when violent, or when quiet. Mrs. Wyers finding this, kept her closely confined, and the door always locked, whether absent or present.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ENCOUNTER.

TWO whole days passed thus; no enquiries reached Mrs. Wyers, and she found in the newspapers no advertisement. Meanwhile Cecilia grew worse every moment, tasted neither drink nor food, raved incessantly, called out twenty times in a breath, "Where is he? which way is he gone?" and implored the woman by the most pathetic remonstrances, to save her unhappy Delvile, *dearer to her than life, more precious than peace or rest!*

At other times she talked of her marriage, of the displeasure of his family, and of her own remorse; entreated the woman not to betray her, and promised to spend the remnant of her days in the heaviness of sorrow and contrition.

Again her fancy roved, and Mr. Monckton took sole possession of it. She reproached him for his perfidy, she bewailed that he was massacred, she would not a moment outlive him, and wildly declared *her last remains should moulder in his hearse!* And thus, though naturally and commonly of a silent and quiet disposition, she was now not a moment still, for the irregular starts of a terrified and disordered imagination were changed into the constant ravings of morbid delirium.

The woman, growing uneasy from her uncertainty of pay for her trouble, asked the advice of some of her friends what was proper for her to do; and they counselled her to put an advertisement into the papers herself the next morning.

The following, therefore, was drawn up and sent to the printer of the Daily Advertiser.

MADNESS.

Whereas a crazy young lady, tall, fair complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair, ran into the Three Blue Balls, in —— street, on Thursday night, the 2d instant, and has been kept there since out of charity. She was dressed in a riding-habit. Whoever she belongs to is desired to send

after her immediately. She has been treated with the utmost care and tenderness. She talks much of some person by the name of Delvile.

N.B. She had no money about her.

May, 1780.

This had but just been sent off, when Mr. Wyers, the man of the house, coming up stairs, said, "Now we shall have two of them, for here's the crazy old gentleman below, that says he has just heard in the neighbourhood of what has happened to us, and he desires to see the poor lady.

"It's as well let him come up, then," answered Mrs. Wyers, "for he goes to all sorts of places and people, and ten to one but he'll bustle about till he finds out who she is."

Mr. Wyers then went down stairs to send him up.

He came instantly. It was Albany, who in his vagrant rambles having heard an unknown mad lady was at this pawn-broker's, came, with his customary eagerness to visit and serve the unhappy, to see what could be done for her.

When he entered the room, she was sitting upon the bed, her eyes earnestly fixed upon the window, from which she was privately indulging a wish to make her escape. Her dress was in much disorder, her fine hair was dishevelled, and the feathers of her riding-hat were broken and half falling down, some shading her face, others reaching to her shoulder.

"Poor lady!" cried Albany, approaching her, "how long has she been in this state?"

She started at the sound of a new voice, she looked round —but what was the astonishment of Albany to see who it was!—He stept back—he came forward—he doubted his own senses,—he looked at her earnestly—he turned from her to look at the woman of the house,—he cast his eyes round the room itself, and then, lifting up his hands, "O, sight of woe!" he cried, "the generous and good! the kind reliever of distress! the benign sustainer of misery! —is *this* Cecilia?"—

Cecilia, imperfectly recollecting, though not understanding him, sunk down at his feet, tremblingly called out, "Oh, if he is yet to be saved, if already he is not murdered,—go to him! fly after him! you will presently over-

take him, he is only in the next street, I left him there myself, his sword drawn, and covered with human blood!"

"Sweet powers of kindness and compassion!" cried the old man, "look upon this creature with pity! she who raised the depressed, she who cheered the unhappy! she whose liberal hand turned lamentations into joy! who never with a tearless eye could hear the voice of sorrow!—is *this* she herself?—can *this* be Cecilia?"

"O, do not wait to talk!" cried she, "go to him now, or you will never see him more; the hand of death is on him,—cold, clay-cold is its touch! he is breathing his last—Oh, murdered Delvile! massacred husband of my heart! groan not so piteously! fly to him, and pluck the poniard from his wounded bosom!"

"Oh, sounds of anguish and horror!" cried the melted moralist, tears running quick down his rugged cheeks; "melancholy indeed is this sight, humiliating to morality! such is human strength, such human felicity!——weak as our virtues, frail as our guilty natures!"

"Ah," cried she, more wildly, "no one will save me now! I am married, and no one will listen to me! ill were the auspices under which I gave my hand! Oh, it was a work of darkness, unacceptable and offensive! it has been sealed, therefore, with blood, and to-morrow it will be signed with murder!"

"Poor distracted creature!" exclaimed he, "thy pangs I have felt, but thy innocence I have forfeited!—my own wounds bleed afresh,——my own brain threatens new frenzy."

Then, starting up, "Good woman," he added, "kindly attend her,—I will seek out her friends, put her into bed, comfort, soothe, compose her.——I will come to you again, and as soon as I can."

He then hurried away.

"Oh, hour of joy!" cried Cecilia, "he is gone to rescue him! oh, blissful moment! he will yet be snatched from slaughter!"

The woman lost not an instant in obeying the orders she had received; she was put into bed, and nothing was neglected, as far as she had power and thought, to give a look of decency and attention to her accommodations.

He had not left them an hour, when Mary, the maid, who had attended her from Suffolk, came to enquire for her lady. Albany, who was now wandering over the town in search of some of her friends, and who entered every house where he imagined she was known, had hastened to that of Mrs. Hill the first of any, as he was well acquainted with her obligations to Cecilia; and there, Mary herself, by the directions which her lady had given Mrs. Belfield, had gone; and there, in the utmost astonishment and uneasiness, had continued till Albany brought news of her.

She was surprised and afflicted beyond measure, not only at the state of her mind, and her health, but to find her in a bed and an apartment so unsuitable to her rank of life, and so different to what she had ever been accustomed. She wept bitterly while she enquired at the bed-side how her lady did, but wept still more, when, without answering, or seeming to know her, Cecilia started up, and called out, "I must be removed this moment! I must go to St. James's-square,—if I stay an instant longer, the passing-bell will toll, and then how shall I be in time for the funeral?"

Mary, alarmed and amazed, turned hastily from her to the woman of the house, who calmly said, the lady was only in a raving fit, and must not be minded.

Extremely frightened at this intelligence, she entreated her to be quiet and lie still. But Cecilia grew suddenly so violent, that force only could keep her from rising; and Mary, unused to dispute her commands, prepared to obey them.

Mrs. Wyers now, in her turn, opposed in vain; Cecilia was peremptory, and Mary became implicit, and, though not without much difficulty, she was again dressed in her riding-habit. This operation over, she moved towards the door, the temporary strength of delirium giving her a hardiness that combated fever, illness, fatigue, and feebleness. Mary, however averse and fearful, assisted her, and Mrs. Wyers, compelled by the obedience of her own servant, went before them to order a chair.

Cecilia, however, felt her weakness when she attempted to move down stairs; her feet tottered, and her head became dizzy; she leaned it against Mary, who called aloud for more help, and made her sit down till it came. Her reso-

lution, however, was not to be altered; a stubbornness, wholly foreign to her genuine character, now made her stern and positive; and Mary, who thought her submission indispensable, cried, but did not offer to oppose her.

Mr. and Mrs. Wyers both came up to assist in supporting her, and Mr. Wyers offered to carry her in his arms; but she would not consent. When she came to the bottom of the stairs, her head grew worse, she again leant it upon Mary, but Mr. Wyers was obliged to hold them both. She still, however, was firm in her determination, and was making another effort to proceed, when Delvile rushed hastily into the shop.

He had just encountered Albany; who, knowing his acquaintance, though ignorant of his marriage with Cecilia, had informed him where to seek her.

He was going to make enquiry if he was come to the right house, when he perceived her, —— feeble, shaking, leaning upon one person, and half carried by another! —— He started back, staggered, gasped for breath, —— but finding they were proceeding, advanced with trepidation, furiously calling out, "Hold! stop! —— what is it you are doing? Monsters of savage barbarity, are you murdering my wife?"

The well-known voice no sooner struck the ears of Cecilia, than instantly recollecting it, she screamed, and, in suddenly endeavouring to spring forward, fell to the ground.

Delvile had vehemently advanced to catch her in his arms and save her fall, which her unexpected quickness had prevented her attendants from doing; but the sight of her changed complexion, and the wildness of her eyes and air, again made him start. —— His blood froze through his veins, and he stood looking at her, cold and almost petrified.[1]

[1] April, 1788. "[Mr. Wyndham] said, 'But I have yet another quarrel with you, and one you must answer. How comes it that the moment you have attached us to the hero and the heroine—the instant you have made us cling to them so that there is no getting disengaged—twined, twisted, twirled them round our very heart-strings,—how is it that then you make them undergo such persecutions? There is really no enduring their distresses, their suspenses, their perplexities. Why are you so cruel to all around—to them and their readers?'"—*Diary of Mme D'Arblay*, p. 138, vol. iv.

Her own recollection of him seemed lost already; and exhausted by the fatigue she had gone through in dressing and coming down stairs, she remained still and quiet, forgetting her design of proceeding, and forming no new one for returning.

Mary, to whom, as to all her fellow servants, the marriage of Cecilia had been known, before she left the country, now desired from Delvile directions what was to be done.

Delvile, starting suddenly at this call from the deepest horror into the most desperate rage, fiercely exclaimed, "Inhuman wretches! unfeeling, execrable wretches, what is it you have done to her? how came she hither?—who brought her? who dragged her?—by what infamous usage has she been sunk into this state?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't know!" cried Mary.

"I assure you, sir," said Mrs. Wyers, "the lady ——"

"Peace!" cried he, furiously, "I will not hear your falsehoods!—peace, and begone!"—

Then casting himself upon the ground by her side, "Oh, my Cecilia," he cried, "where hast thou been thus long? how have I lost thee? what dreadful calamity has befallen thee?—answer me, my love! raise your sweet head and answer me! —— oh, speak! —— say to me anything, the bitterest words will be mercy to this silence?"——

Cecilia then, suddenly looking up, called out with great quickness, "Who are you?"

"Who am I!" cried he, amazed and affrighted.

"I should be glad you would go away," cried she, in a hurrying manner, "for you are quite unknown to me."

Delvile, unconscious of her insanity, and attributing to resentment this aversion and repulse, hastily moved from her, mournfully answering, "Well indeed may you disclaim me, refuse all forgiveness, load me with hatred and reproach, and consign me to eternal anguish! I have merited severer punishment still; I have behaved like a monster, and I am abhorrent to myself!"

Cecilia now, half rising, and regarding him with mingled terror and anger, eagerly exclaimed, "If you do not mean to mangle and destroy me, begone this instant."

"To mangle you!" repeated Devile, shuddering, "how horrible!—but I deserve it all!—look not, however, so

terrified, and I will tear myself away from you. Suffer me but to assist in removing you from this place, and I will only watch you at a distance, and never see you more till you permit me to approach you."

"Why, why," cried Cecilia, with a look of perplexity and impatience, "will you not tell me your name, and where you come from?"

"Do you not know me?" said he, struck with new horror; "or do you only mean to kill me by the question?"

"Do you bring me any message from Mr. Monckton?"

"From Mr. Monckton?—no; but he lives, and will recover."

"I thought you had been Mr. Monckton yourself."

"Too cruel, yet justly cruel Cecilia!—is then Delvile utterly renounced?—the guilty, the unhappy Delvile!—is he cast off for ever? have you driven him wholly from your heart? do you deny him even a place in your remembrance?"

"Is your name, then, Delvile?"

"Oh, what is it you mean! is it me or my name you thus disown?"

"'Tis a name," cried she, sitting up, "I well remember to have heard, and once I loved it, and three times I called upon it in the dead of night. And when I was cold and [illegible]tched, I cherished it; and when I was abandoned and alone, I repeated it and sung to it."

"All-gracious powers!" cried Delvile, "her reason is utterly gone!" And, hastily rising, he desperately added, "what is death to this blow?—Cecilia, I am content to part with thee!"

Mary now, and Mrs. Wyers, poured upon him eagerly an account of her illness, and insanity, her desire of removal, and their inability to control her.

Delvile, however, made no answer; he scarce heard them: the deepest despair took possession of his mind, and, rooted to the spot where he stood, he contemplated in dreadful stillness the fallen and altered object of his best hopes and affections; already, in her faded cheeks and weakened frame, his agonizing terror read the quick impending destruction of all his earthly happiness! the sight was too

much for his fortitude, and almost for his understanding; and when his woe became utterable, he wrung his hands, and groaning aloud, called out, "Art thou gone so soon! my wife! my Cecilia! have I lost thee already?"

Cecilia, with utter insensibility to what was passing, now suddenly, and with a rapid, yet continued motion, turned her head from side to side, her eyes wildly glaring, yet apparently regarding nothing.

"Dreadful! dreadful!" exclaimed Delvile, "what a sight is this!" and turning from her to the people of the house, he angrily said, "why is she here upon the floor? could you not even allow her a bed? Who attends her? Who waits upon her? Why has nobody sent for help?—Don't answer me,—I will not hear you, fly this moment for a physician,—bring two, bring three—bring all you can find!"

Then, still looking from Cecilia, whose sight he could no longer support, he consulted with Mary whither she should be conveyed: and, as the night was far advanced, and no place was prepared for her elsewhere, they soon agreed that she could only be removed up stairs.

Delvile now attempted to carry her in his arms; but trembling and unsteady, he had not strength to sustain her; yet not enduring to behold the helplessness he could not assist, he conjured them to be careful and gentle, and, committing her to their trust, ran out himself for a physician.

Cecilia resisted them with her utmost power, imploring them not to bury her alive, and averring she had received intelligence they meant to entomb her with Mr. Monckton.

They put her, however, to bed, but her raving grew still more wild and incessant.

Delvile soon returned with a physician, but had not courage to attend him to her room. He waited for him at the foot of the stairs, where, hastily stopping him, "Well, sir," he cried, "is it not all over? is it not impossible she can live?"

"She is very ill, indeed, sir," he answered, "but I have given directions which perhaps——"

"*Perhaps!*" interrupted Delvile, shuddering; "do not stab me with such a word!"

"She is very delirious," he continued, "but as her fever is very high, that is not so material. If the orders I have given take effect, and the fever is got under, all the rest will be well of course."

He then went away; leaving Delvile as much thunderstruck by answers so alarming, as if he had consulted him in full hope, and without even suspicion of her danger.

The moment he recovered from this shock, he flew out of the house for more advice.

He returned and brought with him two physicians.

They confirmed the directions already given, but would pronounce nothing decisively of her situation.

Delvile, half mad with the acuteness of his misery, charged them all with want of skill, and wrote instantly into the country for Dr. Lyster.

He went out himself in search of a messenger to ride off express, though it was midnight, with his letter; and then, returning, he was hastening to her room, but, while yet at the door, hearing her still raving, his horror conquered his eagerness, and, hurrying down stairs, he spent the remnant of the long and seemingly endless night in the shop.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRIBUTE.

MEANWHILE Cecilia went through very severe discipline, sometimes strongly opposing it, at other times scarce sensible what was done to her.

The whole of the next day passed in much the same manner, neither did the next night bring any visible alteration. She had now nurses and attendants even more than sufficient, for Delvile had no relief but from calling in more help. His terror of again seeing her, increased with his forbearance; the interview which had already passed had almost torn him asunder, and losing all courage for attempting to enter her room, he now spent almost all his time upon the stairs which led to it. Whenever she was still, he seated himself at her chamber door, where, if he could hear her

breathe or move, a sudden hope of her recovery gave to him a momentary extacy that recompensed all his sufferings. But the instant she spoke, unable to bear the sound of so lovely a voice uttering nothing but the incoherent ravings of lightheadedness, he hastened down stairs, and flying out of the house, walked in the neighbouring streets, till he could again gather courage to enquire or to listen how she went on.

The following morning, however, Dr. Lyster came, and every hope revived. He flew to embrace him, told him instantly his marriage with Cecilia, and besought him by some superior effort of his extraordinary abilities to save him the distraction of her loss.

"My good friend," cried the worthy Doctor, "what is this you ask of me? and how can this poor young lady herself want advice more than you do? Do you think these able physicians actually upon the spot, with all the experience of full practice in London to assist their skill, want a petty Doctor out of the country to come and teach them what is right?"

"I have more reliance upon you," cried Delvile, "than upon the whole faculty; come, therefore, and prescribe for her,—take some new course."—

"Impossible, my good sir, impossible! I must not lose my wits from vanity, because you have lost yours from affliction. I could not refuse to come to you when you wrote to me with such urgency, and I will now go and see the young lady, as a *friend*, with all my heart. I am sorry for you at my soul, Mr. Mortimer! She is a lovely young creature, and has an understanding, for her years and sex, unequalled."

"Never mention her to me!" cried the impatient Delvile, "I cannot bear it! Go up to her, dear Doctor, and if you want a consultation, send, if you please, for every physician in town."

Dr. Lyster desired only that those who already attended might be summoned; and then, giving up to his entreaties the accustomed ceremonial of waiting for them, he went to Cecilia.

Delvile did not dare to accompany him; and so well was he acquainted with his plainness and sincerity, that though

he expected his return with eagerness, he no sooner heard him upon the stairs, than fearing to know his opinion, he hastily snatched up his hat, and rushed vehemently out of the house to avoid him.

He continued to walk about the streets, till even the dread of ill news was less horrible to him than this voluntary suspense, and then he returned to the house.

He found Dr. Lyster in a small back parlour, which Mrs. Wyers, finding she should now be well paid, had appropriated for Delvile's use.

Delvile, putting his hand upon the Doctor's shoulder, said, "Well, my dear Doctor Lyster, *you*, still, I hope"—

"I would I could make you easy!" interrupted the Doctor; "yet, if you are rational, one comfort, at all events, I can give you; the crisis seems approaching, and either she will recover, or before to-morrow morning"——

"Don't go on, sir!" cried Delvile, with mingled rage and horror, "I will not have her days limited! I sent not for you to give me such an account!"

And again he flew out of the house, leaving Dr. Lyster unaffectedly concerned for him, and too kind-hearted and too wise to be offended at the injustice of immoderate sorrow.

In a few minutes, however, from the effect rather of [illegible] than philosophy, Delvile grew more composed, and returned upon Dr. Lyster to apologize for his behaviour. He received his hearty forgiveness, and prevailed upon him to continue in town till the whole was decided.

About noon, Cecilia, from the wildest rambling and most perpetual agitation, sunk suddenly into a state of such utter insensibility, that she appeared unconscious even of her existence; and but that she breathed, she might already have passed for being dead.

When Delvile heard this, he could no longer endure even his post upon the stairs; he spent his whole time in wandering about the streets, or stopping in Dr. Lyster's parlour to enquire if all was over.

That humane physician, not more alarmed at the danger of Cecilia, than grieved at the situation of Delvile, thought the present fearful crisis at least offered an opportunity of reconciling him with his father. He waited, therefore,

upon that gentleman in St. James's-square, and openly informed him of the dangerous state of Cecilia, and the misery of his son.

Mr. Delvile, though he would gladly, to have annulled an alliance he held disgraceful to his family, have received intelligence that Cecilia was no more, was yet extremely disconcerted to hear of sufferings to which his own refusal of an asylum he was conscious had largely contributed; and after a haughty struggle between tenderness and wrath, he begged the advice of Dr. Lyster how his son might be drawn from such a scene.

Dr. Lyster, who well knew Delvile was too desperate to be tractable, proposed surprising him into an interview by their returning together: Mr. Delvile, however apprehensive and relenting, conceded most unwillingly to a measure he held beneath him, and, when he came to the shop, could scarce be persuaded to enter. Mortimer, at that time, was taking a solitary ramble; and Dr. Lyster, to complete the work he had begun of subduing the hard pride of his father, contrived, under pretence of waiting for him, to conduct him to the room of the invalid.

Mr. Delvile, who knew not whither he was going, at first sight of the bed and the attendants, was hastily retreating; but the changed and livid face of Cecilia caught his eye, and, struck with sudden consternation, he involuntarily stopt.

"Look at the poor young lady!" cried Dr. Lyster; "can you wonder a sight such as this should make Mr. Mortimer forget everything else?"

She was wholly insensible, but perfectly quiet; she seemed to distinguish nothing, and neither spoke nor moved.

Mr. Delvile regarded her with the utmost horror: the refuge he so implacably refused her on the night when her intellects were disordered, he would now gladly have offered at the expense of almost similar sufferings, to have relieved himself from those rising pangs which called him author of this scene of woe. His pride, his pomp, his ancient name, were now sunk in his estimation; and while he considered himself the destroyer of this unhappy young creature, he would have sacrificed them all to have called himself her protector. Little is the boast of insolence when it is ana-

lysed by the conscience! bitter is the agony of self-reproach, where misery follows hardness of heart! Yet, when the first painful astonishment from her situation abated, the remorse she excited being far stronger than the pity, he gave an angry glance at Dr. Lyster for betraying him into such a sight, and hastily left the room.

Delvile, who was now impatiently waiting to see Dr. Lyster in the little parlour, alarmed at the sound of a new step upon the stairs, came out to enquire who had been admitted. When he saw his father, he shrunk back; but Mr. Delvile, no longer supported by pride, and unable to recover from the shock he had just received, caught him in his arms, and said "Oh, come home to me, my son! this is a place to destroy you!"

"Ah, sir," cried Delvile, "think not of me now!—you must show me no kindness; I am not in a state to bear it!" And, forcibly breaking from him, he hurried out of the house.

Mr. Delvile, all the father awakened in his bosom, saw his departure with more dread than anger; and returned himself to St. James's-square, tortured with parental fears, and stung by personal remorse, lamenting his own inflexibility, and pursued by the pale image of Cecilia.

She was still in this unconscious state, and apparently as free from suffering as from enjoyment, when a new voice was suddenly heard without, exclaiming, "Oh, where is she? where is she? where is my dear Miss Beverley?" and Henrietta Belfield ran wildly into the room.

The advertisement in the newspapers had at once brought her to town, and directed her to the house: the mention that the lost lady *talked much of a person by the name of Delvile*, struck her instantly to mean Cecilia; the description corresponded with this idea, and the account of the dress confirmed it: Mr. Arnott, equally terrified with herself, had therefore lent her his chaise to learn the truth of this conjecture, and she had travelled all night.

Flying up to the bedside, "Who is this?" she cried, "this is not Miss Beverley?" and then screaming with unrestrained horror, "Oh, mercy! mercy!" she called out, "yes it is indeed! and nobody would know her!—her own mother would not think her her child!"

"You must come away, Miss Belfield," said Mary, "you must indeed,—the doctors all say my lady must not be disturbed."

"Who shall take me away?" cried she, angrily, "nobody, Mary! not all the doctors in the world! Oh, sweet Miss Beverley! I will lie down by your side,—I will never quit you while you live,—and I wish, I wish I could die to save your precious life!"

Then, leaning over her, and wringing her hands, "Oh, I shall break my heart," she cried, "to see her in this condition! Is this the so happy Miss Beverley, that I thought everybody born to give joy to? the Miss Beverley that seemed queen of the whole world! yet so good, and so gentle, so kind to the meanest person! excusing every body's faults but her own, and telling them how they might mend, and trying to make them as good as herself! —Oh, who would know her! what have they done to you, my beloved Miss Beverley? how have they altered and disfigured you in this wicked and barbarous manner?"

In the midst of this simple yet pathetic testimony, to the worth and various excellencies of Cecilia, Dr. Lyster came into the room. The women all flocked around him, except Mary, to vindicate themselves from any share in permitting this new comer's entrance and behaviour; but Mary only told him who she was, and said, that if her lady was well enough to know her, there was nobody, she was certain, she would have been so glad to see.

"Young lady," said the doctor, "I would advise you to walk into another room till you are a little more composed."

"Everybody, I find, is for hurrying me away;" cried the sobbing Henrietta, whose honest heart swelled with its own affectionate integrity; "but they might all save themselves the trouble, for go I will not!"

"This is very wrong," said the Doctor, "and must not be suffered: do you call it friendship to come about a sick person in this manner?"

"Oh, my Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, "do you hear how they all upbraid me? how they all want to force me away from you, and to hinder me even from looking at you! Speak for me, sweet lady! speak for me yourself! tell them the poor Henrietta will not do you any harm; tell them she

only wishes just to sit by you, and to see you!——I will hold by this dear hand,—I will cling to it till the last minute; and you will not, I know you will not, give orders to have it taken away from me!"

Dr. Lyster, though his own good nature was much affected by this fond sorrow, now half angrily represented to her the impropriety of indulging it: but Henrietta, unused to disguise or repress her feelings, grew only the more violent, the more she was convinced of Cecilia's danger: "Oh, look but at her," she exclaimed, "and take me from her if you can? see how her sweet eyes are fixed! look but what a change in her complexion!—She does not see me, she does not know me,—she does not hear me! her hand seems quite lifeless already, her face is all fallen away!—Oh, that I had died twenty deaths before I had lived to see this sight!—poor wretched Henrietta, thou hast now no friend left in the world! thou mayst go and lie down in some corner, and no one will come and say to thee a word of comfort!"

"This must not be!" said Dr. Lyster, "you must take her away."

"You shall not!" cried she, desperately, "I will stay with her till she has breathed her last, and I will stay with her still longer! and if she was to speak to you at this moment, she would tell you that she chose it. She loved the poor Henrietta; and loved to have her near her; and when she was ill, and in much distress, she never once bid me leave her room. Is it not true, my sweet Miss Beverley? do you not know it to be true? Oh, look not so dreadfully! turn to your unhappy Henrietta; sweetest, best of ladies! will you not speak to her once more? will you not say to her one single word?"

Dr. Lyster now grew very angry, and telling her such violence might have fatal consequences, frightened her into more order, and drew her away himself. He had then the kindness to go with her into another room, where, when her first vehemence was spent, his remonstrances and reasoning brought her to a sense of the danger she might occasion, and made her promise not to return to the room till she had gained strength to behave better.

When Dr. Lyster went again to Delvile, he found him greatly alarmed by his long stay; he communicated to him

briefly what had passed, and counselled him to avoid increasing his own grief by the sight of what was suffered by this unguarded and ardent girl. Delvile readily assented, for the weight of his own woe was too heavy to bear any addition.

Henrietta now, kept in order by Dr. Lyster, contented herself with only sitting upon the bed, without attempting to speak, and with no other employment than alternately looking at her sick friend, and covering her streaming eyes with her handkerchief, from time to time quitting the room wholly, for the relief of sobbing at liberty and aloud in another.

But, in the evening, while Delvile and Dr. Lyster were taking one of their melancholy rambles, a new scene was acted in the apartment of the still senseless Cecilia. Albany suddenly made his entrance into it, accompanied by three children, two girls and one boy, from the ages of four to six, neatly dressed, clean, and healthy.

"See here!" cried he, as he came in, "see here what I have brought you! raise, raise your languid head, and look this way! you think me rigid,—an enemy to pleasure, austere, harsh, and a forbidder of joy: look at this sight and see the contrary! who shall bring you comfort, joy, pleasure, like this? three innocent children, clothed and fed by your bounty!"

Henrietta and Mary, who both knew him well, were but little surprised at anything he said or did, and the nurses presumed not to interfere but by whispers.

Cecilia, however, observed nothing that passed; and Albany, somewhat astonished, approached nearer to the bed; "Wilt thou not speak?" he cried.

"She can't, sir," said one of the women; "she has been speechless many hours."

The air of triumph with which he had entered the room was now changed into disappointment and consternation. For some minutes he thoughtfully and sorrowfully contemplated her, and then, with a deep sigh, said, "How will the poor rue this day!"

Then, turning to the children, who, awed by this scene, were quiet from terror, "Alas!" he said, "ye helpless babes, ye know not what you have lost: presumptuously

we came; unheeded we must return! I brought you to be seen by your benefactress, but she is going where she will find many such."

He then led them away; but, suddenly coming back, "I may see her, perhaps, no more! shall I not, then, pray for her? Great and awful is the change she is making; what are human revolutions, how pitiful, how insignificant, compared with it?—Come, little babies, come; with gifts has she often blessed *you*, with wishes bless *her!* Come, let us kneel round her bed; let us all pray for her together; lift up your innocent hands, and for all of you I will speak."

He then made the children obey his injunctions, and having knelt himself, while Henrietta and Mary instantly did the same, "Sweet flower!" he cried, "untimely cropt in years, yet in excellence mature! early decayed in misery, yet fragrant in innocence! Gentle be thy exit, for unsullied have been thy days; brief be thy pains, for few have been thy offences! Look at her, sweet babes, and bear her in your remembrance; often will I visit you, and revive the solemn scene. Look at her, ye, also, who are nearer to your end—Ah! will you bear it like her?"

He paused; and the nurses and Mrs. Wyers, struck by the call, and moved by the general example, crept to the end and dropt on their knees, almost involuntarily.

"She departs," resumed Albany, "the envy of the world! she yet no guilt had seized her soul, and no remorse had marred her peace. She was the hand-maid of charity, and pity dwelt in her bosom! her mouth was never opened but to give comfort; her footsteps were followed by blessings! Oh, happy in purity, be thine the song of triumph!—softly shalt thou sink to temporary sleep,—sublimely shalt thou rise to life that wakes for ever!"

He then got up, took the children by their little hands, and went away.

CHAPTER X.

A TERMINATION.

DR. LYSTER and Delvile met them at the entrance into the house. Extremely alarmed lest Cecilia had received any disturbance, they both hastened up stairs, but Delvile proceeded only to the door. He stopt there and listened; but all was silent: the prayers of Albany had struck an awe into every one; and Dr. Lyster soon returned to tell him there was no alteration in his patient.

"And he has not disturbed her?" cried Delvile.

"No, not at all."

"I think, then," said he, advancing, though trembling, "I will yet see her once more."

"No, no, Mr. Mortimer," cried the doctor, "why should you give yourself so unnecessary a shock?"

"The shock," answered he, "is over!—tell me, however, is there any chance I may hurt *her?*"

"I believe not; I do *not think, just now, she will perceive you.*"

"Well, then,—I may grieve, perhaps, hereafter, that more—that one glance!"—He stopt, irresolute: the D would again have dissuaded him, but, after a little tation, he assured him he was prepared for the worst, and forced himself into the room.

When again, however, he beheld Cecilia,—senseless, speechless, motionless, her features void of all expression, her cheeks without colour, her eyes without meaning,—he shrunk from the sight, he leant upon Dr. Lyster, and almost groaned aloud.

The Doctor would have conducted him out of the apartment; but, recovering from this first agony, he turned again to view her, and casting up his eyes, fervently ejaculated, "Oh, merciful powers! Take, or destroy her! let her not linger thus, rather let me lose her for ever!—Oh, far rather would I see her dead, than in this dreadful condition!"

Then, advancing to the bedside, and yet more earnestly looking at her, "I pray not now," he cried, "for thy life! inhumanly as I have treated thee, I am not yet so hardened as to wish thy misery lengthened: no, quick be thy restoration, or short as pure thy passage to eternity!—Oh, my Cecilia! lovely, however altered! sweet even in the arms of death and insanity! and dearer to my tortured heart in this calamitous state, than in all thy pride of health and beauty!—"

He stopt, and turned from her, yet could not tear himself away; he came back, he again looked at her, he hung over her in anguish unutterable; he kissed each burning hand, he folded to his bosom her feeble form, and, recovering his speech, though almost bursting with sorrow, faintly articulated, "Is all over? no ray of reason left? no knowledge of thy wretched Delvile?—no, none!—the hand of death is on her, and she is utterly gone!—sweet, suffering excellence! loved, lost, expiring Cecilia!——but I will not repine! peace and kindred angels are watching to receive thee, and if thou art parted from thyself, it were impious to lament thou shouldst be parted from me.—Yet in thy tomb will be deposited all that to me could render existence supportable, every frail chance of happiness, every sustaining hope, and all alleviation of sorrow!"

Dr. Lyster now again approaching, thought he perceived some change in his patient, and peremptorily forced him away from her: then returning himself, he found that her eyes were shut, and she was dropt asleep.

This was an omen the most favourable he could hope. He now seated himself by the bedside, and determined not to quit her till the expected crisis was past. He gave the strictest orders for the whole house to be kept quiet, and suffered no one in the room either to speak or move.

Her sleep was long and heavy; yet, when she awoke, her sensibility was evidently returned. She started, suddenly raised her head from the pillow, looked round her, and called out, "where am I now?"

"Thank heaven!" cried Henrietta, and was rushing forward, when Dr. Lyster, by a stern and angry look, compelled her again to take her seat.

He then spoke to her himself, enquired how she did, and found her quite rational.

Henrietta, who now doubted not her perfect recovery, wept as violently for joy as she had before wept for grief; and Mary, in the same belief, ran instantly to Delvile, eager to carry to him the first tidings that her mistress had recovered her reason.

Delvile, in the utmost emotion, then returned to the chamber; but stood at some distance from the bed, waiting Dr. Lyster's permission to approach it.

Cecilia was quiet and composed, her recollection seemed restored, and her intellects sound: but she was faint and weak, and contentedly silent, to avoid the effort of speaking.

Dr. Lyster encouraged this stillness, and suffered not any one, not even Delvile, to advance to her. After a short time, however, she again, and very calmly, began to talk to him. She now first knew him, and seemed much surprised by his attendance. She could not tell, she said, what of late had happened to her, nor could guess where she was, or by what means she came into such a place. Dr. Lyster desired her at present not to think upon the subject, and promised her a full account of everything, when she was stronger, and more fit for conversing.

This for a while silenced her. But, after a short pause, "Tell me," she said, "Dr. Lyster, have I no friend in this place but you?" "Yes, yes, you have several friends here," answered the Doctor, "only I keep them in order, lest they should hurry or disturb you."

She seemed much pleased by this speech; but soon after said, "You must not, Doctor, keep them in order much longer, for the sight of them, I think, would much revive me."

"Ah, Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, who could not now restrain herself, "may not *I*, among the rest, come and speak to you?"

"Who is that?" said Cecilia, in a voice of pleasure, though very feeble; "is it my ever-dear Henrietta?"

"Oh, this is joy, indeed!" cried she, fervently kissing her cheeks and forehead, "joy that I never, never expected to have more!"

"Come, come," cried Doctor Lyster, "here's enough of this; did I not do well to keep such people off?"

"I believe you did," said Cecilia, faintly smiling; "my too kind Henrietta, you must be more tranquil!"

"I will, I will, indeed, madam!—my dear, dear Miss Beverley, I will, indeed!—now once have you owned me, and once again I hear your sweet voice, I will do anything, and everything, for I am made happy for my whole life!"

"Ah, sweet Henrietta!" cried Cecilia, giving her her hand, "you must suppress these feelings, or our Doctor here will soon part us. But tell me, Doctor, is there no one else that you can let me see?"

Delvile, who had listened to this scene in the unspeakable perturbation of that hope which is kindled from the very ashes of despair, was now springing forward; but Dr. Lyster, fearful of the consequences, hastily arose, and with a look and air not to be disputed, took hold of his arm, and led him out of the room. He then represented to him strongly the danger of agitating, or disturbing her, and charged him to keep from her sight till better able to bear it; assuring him at the same time that he might now reasonably hope her recovery.

Delvile, lost in transport, could make no answer, but flew into his arms, and almost madly embraced him; he then hastened out of sight to pour forth fervent thanks, and hurrying back with equal speed, again embraced the Doctor, and while his manly cheeks were burnt with tears of joy, he could not yet articulate the glad tumult of his soul.

The worthy Dr. Lyster, who heartily partook of his happiness, again urged him to be discreet; and Delvile, no longer intractable and desperate, gratefully concurred in whatever he commanded. Dr. Lyster then returned to Cecilia, and to relieve her mind from any uneasy suspense, talked to her openly of Delvile, gave her to understand he was acquainted with her marriage, and told her he had prohibited their meeting till each was better able to support it.

Cecilia by this delay seemed half gratified, and half disappointed; but the rest of the physicians, who had been summoned upon this happy change, now appearing, the

orders were yet more strictly enforced for keeping her quiet.

She submitted, therefore, peaceably; and Delvile, whose gladdened heart still throbbed with speechless rapture, contentedly watched at her chamber door, and obeyed implicitly whatever was said to him.

She now visibly, and almost hourly grew better; and, in a short time, her anxiety to know all that was passed, and by what means she became so ill, and confined in a house of which she had not any knowledge, obliged Dr. Lyster to make himself master of these particulars, that he might communicate them to her with a calmness that Delvile could not attain.

Delvile himself, happy to be spared the bitter task of such a relation, informed him all he knew of the story, and then entreating him to narrate to her also the motives of his own strange, and he feared unpardonable conduct, and the scenes which had followed their parting.

He came, he said, to England, ignorant of all that had passed in his absence, intending merely to wait upon his father, and communicate his marriage, before he gave directions to his lawyer for the settlements and preparations which were to precede its further publication. He meant, also, to satisfy himself of the real situation of Mr. Monckton, and then, after an interview with Cecilia, to have returned to his mother, and waited at Nice till he might publicly claim his wife.

To this purpose he had written in his letter, which he meant to have put in the Post-office in London himself; and he had but just alighted from his chaise, when he met Ralph, Cecilia's servant, in the street.

Hastily stopping him, he enquired if he had left his place? "No," answered Ralph, "I am only come up to town with my lady."

"With your lady!" cried the astonished Delvile, "is your lady then in town?"

"Yes, sir, she is at Mrs. Belfield's."

"At Mrs. Belfield's?—is her daughter returned home?"

"No, sir, we left her in the country."

He was then going on with a further account, but, in too much confusion of mind to hear him, Delvile abruptly

wished him good night, and marched on himself towards Belfield's.

The pleasure with which he would have heard that Cecilia was so near to him, was totally lost in his perplexity to account for her journey. Her letters had never hinted at such a purpose,—the news reached him only by accident —it was ten o'clock at night,—yet she was at Belfield's—though the sister was away,—though the mother was professedly odious to her!—In an instant, all he had formerly heard, all he had formerly disregarded, rushed suddenly upon his memory, and he began to believe he had been deluded, that his father was right, and that Belfield had some strange and improper influence over her heart.

The suspicion was death to him; he drove it from him, he concluded the whole was some error: his reason as powerfully as his tenderness vindicated her innocence; and though he arrived at the house in much disorder, he yet arrived with a firm persuasion of an honourable explanation.

The door was open,—a chaise was at it in waiting,—Mrs. Belfield was listening in the passage; these appearances were strange, and increased his agitation. He asked for her son in a voice scarce audible,—she told him he was engaged with a lady, and must not be disturbed.

That fatal answer, at a moment so big with the most horrible surmises, was decisive: furiously, therefore, he forced himself past her, and opened the door:—but when he saw them together, the rest of the family confessedly excluded, his rage turned to horror, and he could hardly support himself.

"O, Dr. Lyster!" he continued, "ask of the sweet creature if these circumstances offer any extenuation for the fatal jealousy which seized me? never by myself while I live will it be forgiven, but she, perhaps, who is all softness, all compassion, and all peace, may some time hence think my sufferings almost equal to my offence."

He then proceeded in his narration.

When he had so peremptorily ordered her chaise to St. James's-square, he went back to the house, and desired Belfield to walk out with him. He complied, and they were both silent till they came to a coffee-house, where they asked for a private room. The whole way they went, his heart, secretly satisfied of the purity of Cecilia, smote him

for the situation in which he had left her; yet, having unfortunately gone so far as to make his suspicions apparent, he thought it necessary to his character that their abolition should be equally public.

When they were alone, "Belfield," he said, "to obviate any imputation of impertinence in my enquiries, I deny not, what I presume you have been told by herself, that I have the nearest interest in whatever concerns the lady from whom we are just now parted: I must beg, therefore, an explicit account of the purpose of your private conversation with her."

"Mr. Delvile," answered Belfield, with mingled candour and spirit, "I am not commonly disposed to answer enquiries thus cavalierly put to me; yet here, as I find myself not the principal person concerned, I think I am bound in justice to speak for the absent who is. I assure you, therefore, most solemnly, that your interest in Miss Beverley I never heard but by common report, that our being alone together was by both of us undesigned and undesired, that the honour she did our house in calling at it, was merely to acquaint my mother with my sister's removal to Mrs. Harrel's, and that the part which I had myself in her condescension, was simply to be consulted upon a journey which she has in contemplation to the South of France. And now, sir, having given you this peaceable satisfaction, you will find me extremely at your service to offer any other."

Delvile instantly held out his hand to him; "What you assert," he said, "upon your honour, requires no other testimony. Your gallantry and your probity are equally well known to me; with either, therefore, I am content, and by no means require the intervention of both."

They then parted; and now, his doubts removed, and his punctilio satisfied, he flew to St. James's-square, to entreat the forgiveness of Cecilia for the alarm he had occasioned her, and to hear the reason of her sudden journey, and change of measures. But when he came there, to find that his father, whom he had concluded was at Delville Castle, was in the house, while Cecilia had not even enquired for him at the door,—"Oh let me not," he continued, "even to myself, let me not trace the agony of that moment!—Where to seek her I knew not; why she was in London I

could not divine; for what purpose she had given the postillion a new direction I could form no idea. Yet it appeared that she wished to avoid me, and once more, in the frenzy of my disappointment, I supposed Belfield a party in her concealment. Again, therefore, I sought him—at his own house,—at the coffee-house where I had left him, —in vain; wherever I came, I just missed him, for, hearing of my search, he went with equal restlessness from place to place to meet me. I rejoice we both failed; a repetition of my enquiries in my then irritable state, must inevitably have provoked the most fatal resentment.

"I will not dwell upon the scenes that followed—my laborious search, my fruitless wanderings, the distraction of my suspense, the excess of my despair!—even Belfield, the fiery Belfield, when I met with him the next day, was so much touched by my wretchedness, that he bore with all my injustice; feeling, noble young man! never will I lose the remembrance of his high-souled patience.

"And now, Dr. Lyster, go to my Cecilia; tell her this tale, and try, for you have skill sufficient to soften, yet not wound her with my sufferings. If then she can bear to see me, to bless me with the sound of her sweet voice, no longer at war with her intellects, to hold out to me her loved hand, in token of peace and forgiveness.—Oh, Dr. Lyster! preserver of *my* life in hers! give to me but that exquisite moment, and every past evil will be for ever obliterated!"

"You must be calmer, sir," said the Doctor, "before I make the attempt. These heroics are mighty well for sound health, and strong nerves, but they will not do for an invalid."

He went, however, to Cecilia, and gave her this narration, suppressing whatever he feared would most affect her, and judiciously enlivening the whole by his strictures. Cecilia was much easier for this removal of her perplexities, and, as her anguish and her terror had been unmixed with resentment, she had now no desire but to reconcile Delvile with himself.

Dr. Lyster, however, by his friendly authority, obliged her for some time to be content with this relation; but when she grew better, her impatience became stronger, and he feared opposition would be as hurtful as compliance.

Delvile, therefore, was now admitted; yet slowly and

with trepidation he advanced, terrified for her, and fearful of himself, filled with remorse for the injuries she had sustained, and impressed with grief and horror to behold her so ill and altered.

Supported by pillows, she sat almost upright. The moment she saw him, she attempted to bend forward and welcome him, calling out in a tone of pleasure, though faintly, "Ah! dearest Delvile! is it you?" but too weak for the effort she had made, she sunk back upon her pillow, pale, trembling, and disordered.

Dr. Lyster would then have interfered to postpone their further conversation; but Delvile was no longer master of himself or his passions: he darted forward, and kneeling at the bed-side, "Sweet injured excellence!" he cried, "wife of my heart! sole object of my chosen affection! dost thou yet live? do I hear thy loved voice?—do I see thee again?—art thou my Cecilia? and have I indeed not lost thee?" then regarding her more fixedly, "Alas," he cried, "art thou indeed my Cecilia? so pale, so emaciated!—Oh, suffering angel! and couldst thou then call upon Delvile, the guilty, but heart-broken Delvile, thy destroyer, thy murderer, and yet not call to execrate him?"

Cecilia, extremely affected, could not utter a word; she held out to him her hand, she looked at him with gentleness and kindness, but tears started into her eyes, and trickled in large drops down her colourless cheeks.

"Angelic creature!" cried Delvile, his own tears overflowing, while he pressed to his lips the kind token of her pardon, "can you give to me again a hand so ill deserved? can you look with such compassion on the author of your woes? on the wretch who for an instant could doubt the purity of a mind so seraphic?"

"Ah, Delvile!" cried she, a little reviving, "think no more of what is past!—to see you,—to be yours,—drives all evil from my remembrance.

"I am not worthy this joy!" cried he, rising, kneeling, and rising again: "I know not how to sustain it! a forgiveness such as this,—when I believed you must hate me for ever! when repulse and aversion were all I dared expect,—when my own inhumanity had bereft thee of thy reason,—when the grave, the pitiless grave, was already open to receive thee."—

"Too kind, too feeling Delvile!" cried the penetrated Cecilia, "relieve your loaded heart from these bitter recollections; mine is lightened already,—lightened, I think, of everything but its affection for *you!*"

"Oh, words of transport and extacy!" cried the enraptured Delvile, "oh, partner of my life! friend, solace, darling of my bosom! that so lately I thought expiring! that I folded to my bleeding heart in the agony of eternal separation!"—

"Come away, sir, come away," cried Dr. Lyster, who now saw that Cecilia was greatly agitated, "I will not be answerable for the continuation of this scene;" and taking him by the arm, he awakened him from his frantic rapture, by assuring him she would faint, and forced him away from her.

Soon after he was gone, and Cecilia became more tranquil, Henrietta, who had wept with bitterness in a corner of the room during this scene, approached her, and, with an attempted smile, though in a voice hardly audible, said, "Ah, Miss Beverley, you will, at last, then be happy! happy as all your goodness deserves. And I am sure I should rejoice in it if I was to die to make you happier!"

Cecilia, who but too well knew her full meaning, tenderly embraced her, but was prevented by Dr. Lyster from entering into any discourse with her.

The first meeting, however, with Delvile being over, the second was far more quiet, and in a very short time, he would scarcely quit her a moment, Cecilia herself receiving from his sight a pleasure too great for denial, yet too serene for danger.

The worthy Dr. Lyster, finding her prospect of recovery thus fair, prepared for leaving London: but, equally desirous to do good out of his profession as in it, he first, at the request of Delvile, waited upon his father, to acquaint him with his present situation, solicit his directions for his future proceedings, and endeavour to negotiate a general reconciliation.

Mr. Delvile, to whose proud heart social joy could find no avenue, was yet touched most sensibly by the restoration of Cecilia. Neither his dignity nor his displeasure had been able to repress remorse, a feeling to which, with all

his foibles, he had not been accustomed. The view of her distraction had dwelt upon his imagination, the despondency of his son had struck him with fear and horror. He had been haunted by self-reproach, and pursued by vain regret; and those concessions he had refused to tenderness and entreaty, he now willingly accorded to change repentance for tranquillity. He sent instantly for his son, whom even with tears he embraced, and felt his own peace restored as he pronounced his forgiveness.

New, however, to kindness, he retained it not long, and a stranger to generosity, he knew not how to make her welcome: the extinction of his remorse abated his compassion for Cecilia, and when solicited to receive her, he revived the charges of Mr. Monckton.

Cecilia, informed of this, determined to write to that gentleman herself, whose long and painful illness, joined to his irrecoverable loss of her, she now hoped might prevail with him to make reparation for the injuries he had done her.

To Mr. Monckton.

I write not, sir, to upbraid you; the woes which have followed your ill offices, and which you may some time hear, will render my reproaches superfluous. I write but to beseech that what is past may content you; and that, however, while I was single, you chose to misrepresent me to the Delvile family, you will have so much honour, since I am now become one of it, as to acknowledge my innocence of the crimes laid to my charge.

In remembrance of my former long friendship, I send you my good wishes; and in consideration of my hopes from your recantation, I send you, sir, if you think it worth acceptance, my forgiveness.

Cecilia Delvile.

Mr. Monckton, after many long and painful struggles between useless rage, and involuntary remorse, at length sent the following answer.

To Mrs. Mortimer Delvile.

Those who could ever believe you guilty, must have

been eager to think you so. I meant but your welfare at all times, and to have saved you from a connection I never thought equal to your merit. I am grieved, but not surprised, to hear of your injuries; from the alliance you have formed, nothing else could be expected: if my testimony to your innocence can, however, serve to mitigate them, I scruple not to declare I believe it without taint.

Delvile sent by Dr. Lyster this letter to his father, whose rage at the detection of the perfidy which had deceived him, was yet inferior to what he felt that his family was mentioned so injuriously.

His conference with Dr. Lyster was long and painful, but decisive: that sagacious and friendly man knew well how to work upon his passions, and so effectually awakened them by representing the disgrace of his own family from the present situation of Cecilia, that before he quitted his house he was authorised to invite her to remove to it.

When he returned from his embassy, he found Delvile in her room, and each waiting with impatience the event of his negotiation.

The Doctor with much alacrity gave Cecilia the invitation with which he had been charged; but Delvile, jealous for her dignity, was angry and dissatisfied his father brought it not himself, and exclaimed with much mortification, "Is this all the grace accorded me?"

"Patience, patience, sir," answered the Doctor; "when you have thwarted anybody in their first hope and ambition, do you expect they will send you their compliments and many thanks for the disappointment? Pray let the good gentleman have his way in some little matters, since you have taken such effectual care to put out of his reach the power of having it in greater."

"O, far from starting obstacles," cried Cecilia, "let us solicit a reconciliation with whatever concessions he may require. The misery of DISOBEDIENCE we have but too fatally experienced; and thinking as we think of filial ties and parental claims, how can we ever hope happiness till forgiven and taken into favour?"

"True, my Cecilia," answered Delvile, "and generous and condescending as true; and if *you* can thus sweetly

comply, I will gratefully forbear making any opposition. Too much already have you suffered from the impetuosity of my temper, but I will try to curb it in future by the remembrance of your injuries."

"The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr. Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. Your uncle, the Dean, began it, by his arbitrary will, as if an ordinance of his own could arrest the course of nature! and as if *he* had power to keep alive, by the loan of a name, a family in the male branch already extinct. Your father, Mr. Mortimer, continued it with the same self-partiality, preferring the wretched gratification of tickling his ear with a favourite sound, to the solid happiness of his son with a rich and deserving wife. Yet this, however, remember; if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination: for all that I could say to Mr. Delvile, either of reasoning or entreaty,—and I said all I could suggest, and I suggested all a man need wish to hear,—was totally thrown away, till I pointed out to him his *own* disgrace, in having a *daughter-in-law* immured in these mean lodgings!

"Thus, my dear young lady, the terror which drove you to this house, and the sufferings which have confined you in it, will prove, in the event, the source of your future peace: for when all my best rhetoric failed to melt Mr. Delvile, I instantly brought him to terms by coupling his name with a pawnbroker's! And he could not with more disgust hear his son called Mr. Beverley, than think of his son's wife when he hears of the *Three Blue Balls!* Thus the same passions, taking but different directions, *do* mischief and *cure* it alternately.[1]

[1] "The people I have ever met with who have been fond of blood and family, have all scouted *title* when put in any competition with it. How then should these proud Delviles think a new-created peerage any equivalent for calling their sons' sons, for future generations, by the name of Beverley? . . . . Besides, my own end will be lost if I change the conclusion, which was chiefly to point out the absurdity and short-sightedness of those *name-compelling* wills, which make it always presumed a woman marries an inferior, since he, not she, is to leave his own family in order to be incorporated into hers."—*Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, April 6, 1782. *Diary*, p. 136, vol. ii.

"Such, my good young friends, is the MORAL of your calamities. You have all, in my opinion, been strangely at cross-purposes, and trifled, no one knows why, with the first blessings of life. My only hope is that now, having among you thrown away its luxuries, you will have known enough of misery to be glad to keep its necessaries."

This excellent man was yet prevailed upon by Delvile to stay and assist in removing the feeble Cecilia to St. James's-square.

Henrietta, for whom Mr. Arnott's equipage and servants had still remained in town, was then, though with much difficulty, persuaded to go back to Suffolk: but Cecilia, however fond of her society, was too sensible of the danger and impropriety of her present situation, to receive from it any pleasure.

Mr. Delvile's reception of Cecilia was formal and cold: yet, as she now appeared publicly in the character of his son's wife, the best apartment in his house had been prepared for her use, his domestics were instructed to wait upon her with the utmost respect, and Lady Honoria Pemberton, who was accidentally in town, offered from curiosity, what Mr. Delvile accepted from parade, to be herself in St. James's-square, in order to do honour to his daughter-in-law's first entrance.[1]

When Cecilia was a little recovered from the shock of the first interview, and the fatigue of her removal, the anxious Mortimer would instantly have had her conveyed to her own apartment; but, willing to exert herself, and hoping to oblige Mr. Delvile, she declared she was well able to remain some time longer in the drawing-room.

"My good friends," said Dr. Lyster, "in the course of

[1] "Many particulars, which I did not quite relish, are softened off to a degree that, if I do not perfectly assent to, I know not how to condemn, particularly in the instance of old Delvile, in whom (without departing from his original character, which would have been unpardonable) you have found means, fairly accounted for, to melt down some of that senseless, obstinate, inherent pride, which, if still kept up to its height, would have rendered miserable those who ought to have been dearest to him, and established him (which would have been a great impropriety), without any necessity (young Delvile's father, and the excellent Mrs. Delvile's husband) the most hateful of beings."—*Mr. Crisp to Miss Burney*, 1782.

my long practice, I have found it impossible to study the human frame without a little studying the human mind; and from all that I have yet been able to make out, either by observation, reflection, or comparison, it appears to me at this moment, that Mr. Mortimer Delvile has got the best wife, and that you, sir, have here the most faultless daughter-in-law, that any husband or any father in the three kingdoms belonging to his Majesty can either have or desire."

Cecilia smiled; Mortimer looked his delighted concurrence; Mr. Delvile forced himself to make a stiff inclination of the head; and Lady Honoria gaily exclaimed, "Dr. Lyster, when you say the *best* and the most *faultless*, you should always add the rest of the company excepted."

"Upon my word," cried the Doctor, "I beg your ladyship's pardon; but there is a certain unguarded warmth comes across a man now and then, that drives *etiquette* out of his head, and makes him speak truth before he well knows where he is."

"O, terrible!" cried she, "this is sinking deeper and deeper. I had hoped the town air would have taught you better things; but I find you have visited at Delvile Castle till you are fit for no other place."

"Whoever, Lady Honoria," said Mr. Delvile, much offended, "is fit for Delvile Castle, must be fit for *every* other place; though every other place may by no means be fit for him."

"O, yes, sir," cried she, giddily, "every possible place will be fit for him, if he can once bear with that. Don't you think so, Dr. Lyster?"

"Why, when a man has the honour to see your ladyship," answered he, good-humouredly, "he is apt to think too much of the person, to care about the place."

"Come, I begin to have some hopes of you," cried she, "for I see, for a Doctor, you have really a very pretty notion of a compliment: only you have one great fault still; you look the whole time as if you said it for a joke."

"Why, in fact, madam, when a man has been a plain dealer both in word and look for upwards of fifty years, 'tis expecting too quick a reformation to demand ductility of voice and eye from him at a blow. However, give me

but a little time and a little encouragement, and, with such a tutress, 'twill be hard if I do not, in a very few lessons, learn the right method of seasoning a simper, and the newest fashion of twisting words from meaning."

"But pray," cried she, "upon those occasions, alway remember to look serious. Nothing sets off a compliment so much as a long face. If you are tempted to an unseasonable laugh, think of Delvile Castle; 'tis an expedient I commonly make use of myself when I am afraid of being too frisky: and it always succeeds, for the very recollection of it gives me the head-ache in a moment. Upon my word, Mr. Delvile, you must have the constitution of five men, to have kept such good health, after living so long at that horrible place. You can't imagine how you've surprised me, for I have regularly expected to hear of your death at the end of every summer; and, I assure you, once I was very near buying mourning."

"The estate which descends to a man from his own ancestors, Lady Honoria," answered Mr. Delvile, "will seldom be apt to injure his health, if he is conscious of committing no misdemeanour which has degraded their memory."

"How vastly odious this new father of yours is!" said Lady Honoria, in a whisper to Cecilia; "what could ever induce you to give up your charming estate for the sake of coming into his fusty old family! I would really advise you to have your marriage annulled. You have only, you know, to take an oath that you were forcibly run away with; and as you are an heiress, and the Delviles are all so violent, it will easily be credited. And then, as soon as you are at liberty, I would advise you to marry my little Lord Derford."

"Would you only, then," said Cecilia, "have me regain my freedom in order to part with it?"

"Certainly," answered Lady Honoria, "for you can do nothing at all without being married; a single woman is a thousand times more shackled than a wife; for, she is accountable to everybody; and a wife, you know, has nothing to do but just to manage her husband."

"And that," said Cecilia, smiling, "you consider as a trifle?"

"Yes, if you do but marry a man you don't care for."

"You are right, then, indeed, to recommend to me my Lord Derford!"

"O yes, he will make the prettiest husband in the world; you may fly about yourself as wild as a lark, and keep him the whole time as tame as a jack-daw; and though he may complain of you to your friends, he will never have the courage to find fault to your face. But as to Mortimer, you will not be able to govern him as long as you live; for the moment you have put him upon the fret, you'll fall into the dumps yourself, hold out your hand to him, and, losing the opportunity of gaining some material point, make up at the first soft word."

"You think, then, the quarrel more amusing than the reconciliation?"

"O, a thousand times! for while you are quarrelling you may say anything, and demand anything, but when you are reconciled, you ought to behave pretty, and seem contented."

"Those who presume to have any pretensions to your ladyship," said Cecilia, "would be made happy indeed should they hear your principles!"

"O, it would not signify at all," answered she, "for one's fathers, and uncles, and those sort of people, always make connexions for one, and not a creature thinks of our principles, till they find them out by our conduct: and nobody can possibly do that till we are married, for they give us no power beforehand. The men know nothing of us in the world while we are single, but how we can dance a minuet, or play a lesson upon the harpsichord."

"And what else," said Mr. Delvile, who advanced, and heard this last speech, "need a young lady of rank desire to be known for? your ladyship surely would not have her degrade herself by studying like an artist or professor?"

"O, no, sir, I would not have her study at all; it's mighty well for children, but really after sixteen, and when one is come out, one has quite fatigue enough in dressing, and going to public places, and ordering new things, without all that torment of first and second position, and E upon the first line, and F upon the first space!"

"Your ladyship must, however, pardon me for hinting," said Mr. Delvile, "that a young lady of condition, who has

a proper sense of her dignity, cannot be seen too rarely, or known too little."

"O, but I hate dignity!" cried she, carelessly, "for it's the dullest thing in the world. I always thought it was owing to that you were so little amusing;—really, I beg your pardon, sir, I meant to say, so little talkative."

"I can easily credit that your ladyship spoke hastily," answered he, highly piqued, "for I believe, indeed, a person of family such as mine, will hardly be supposed to have come into the world for the office of amusing it!"

"O, no, sir," cried she, with pretended innocence, "nobody, I am sure, ever saw you with such a thought." Then, turning to Cecilia, she added in a whisper, "You cannot imagine, my dear Mrs. Mortimer, how I detest this old cousin of mine! Now pray tell me honestly if you don't hate him yourself?"

"I hope," said Cecilia, "to have no reason."

"Lord, how you are always upon your guard! If I were half as cautious, I should die of the vapours in a month; the only thing that keeps me at all alive, is now and then making people angry; for the folks at our house let me go out so seldom, and then send me with such stupid old chaperons, that giving them a little torment is really the only entertainment I can procure myself. O—but I had almost forgot to tell you a most delightful thing!"

"What is it?"

"Why you must know I have the greatest hopes in the world that my father will quarrel with old Mr. Delvile!"

"And is that such a delightful thing?"

"O, yes; I have lived upon the very idea this fortnight; for then, you know, they'll both be in a passion, and I shall see which of them looks frightfullest."

"When Lady Honoria whispers," cried Mortimer, "I always suspect some mischief."

"No, indeed," answered her ladyship, "I was merely congratulating Mrs. Mortimer about her marriage. Though really, upon second thoughts, I don't know whether I should not rather condole with her, for I have long been convinced she has a prodigious antipathy to you. I saw it the whole time I was at Delvile Castle, where she used to change colour at the very sound of your name; a symptom I never

perceived when I talked to her of my Lord Derford, who would certainly have made her a thousand times a better husband."

"If you mean on account of his title, Lady Honoria," said Mr. Delvile: "your ladyship must be strangely forgetful of the connections of your family, not to remember that Mortimer, after the death of his uncle and myself, must inevitably inherit one far more honourable than a new-sprung-up family, like my Lord Ernolf's, could offer."

"Yes, sir; but then, you know, she would have kept her estate, which would have been a vastly better thing than an old pedigree of new relations. Besides, I don't find that anybody cares for the noble blood of the Delviles but themselves; and if she had kept her fortune, everybody, I fancy, would have cared for *that*."

"Everybody, then," said Mr. Delvile, "must be highly mercenary and ignoble, or the blood of an ancient and honourable house would be thought contaminated by the most distant hint of so degrading a comparison."[1]

"Dear sir, what should we all do with birth if it was not for wealth? it would neither take us to Ranelagh nor the Opera; nor buy us caps, nor wigs, nor supply us with dinners, nor bouquets."

"Caps and wigs, dinners and bouquets!" interrupted Mr. Delvile; "your ladyship's estimate of wealth is really extremely minute."

[1] "'I only wish,' said the Duchess" (of Portland) "'Miss Burney could have been in some corner, amusing herself with listening to us, when Lord Weymouth, and the Bishop of Exeter"* (Dr. Ross), "and Mr. Lightfoot, and Mrs. Delany, and I were all discussing the point of the name. So earnest we were, she must have been diverted with us. Nothing, the nearest our own hearts and interests, could have been debated more warmly. The Bishop was quite as eager as any of us; but what cooled us a little, at last, was Mr. Lightfoot's thinking we were seriously going to quarrel; and while Mrs. Delany and I were disputing about Mrs. Delvile, he very gravely said, 'Why, ladies, this is only a matter of imagination; it is not a fact: don't be so earnest.'"—*Diary of Mme. D'Arblay*, p. 256, vol. ii.

* "I remember the word *novel* was long in the way of 'Cecilia,' as I was told at the Queen's house; and it was not permitted to be read by the Princesses till sanctioned by a Bishop's recommendation,—the late Dr. Ross of Exeter."—*Mme. D'Arblay to Dr. Burney*, June 18, 1795; *Diary*, p. 47, vol. vi.

"Why, you know, sir, as to caps and wigs, they are very serious things, for we should look mighty droll figures to go about bare-headed; and as to dinners, how would the Delviles have lasted all these thousand centuries if they had disdained eating them?"

"Whatever may be your ladyship's satisfaction," said Mr. Delvile, angrily, "in depreciating a house that has the honour of being nearly allied with your own, you will not, I hope at least, instruct this lady," turning to Cecilia, "to adopt a similar contempt of its antiquity and dignity."

"This lady," cried Mortimer, "will at least, by condescending to become one of it, secure us from any danger that such contempt may spread further."

"Let me but," said Cecilia, looking gratefully at him, "be as secure from exciting as I am from feeling contempt, and what can I have to wish?"

"Good and excellent young lady!" said Dr. Lyster, "the first of blessings indeed is yours in the temperance of your own mind. When you began your career in life, you appeared, to us short-sighted mortals, to possess more than your share of the good things of this world; such a union of riches, beauty, independence, talents, education, and virtue, seemed a monopoly to raise general envy and discontent; but mark with what scrupulous exactness the good and bad is ever balanced! You have had a thousand sorrows to which those who have looked up to you have been strangers, and for which not all the advantages you possess have been equivalent. There is evidently throughout this world, in things as well as persons, a levelling principle, at war with pre-eminence, and destructive of perfection."

"Ah!" cried Mortimer, in a low voice to Cecilia, "how much higher must we all rise, or how much lower must you fall, ere any levelling principle will approximate us with YOU!"

He then entreated her to spare her strength and spirits by removing to her own apartment; and the conversation was broken up.

"Pray permit me, Mrs. Mortimer," cried Lady Honoria, in taking leave, "to beg that the first guest you invite to Delvile Castle may be me. You know my partiality to it already. I shall be particularly happy in waiting upon you

in tempestuous weather! We can all stroll out together, you know, very sociably; and I sha'n't be much in your way, for if there should happen to be a storm, you can easily lodge me under some great tree, and while you amuse yourselves with a tête-à-tête, give me the indulgence of my own reflections. I am vastly fond of thinking, and being alone, you know,—especially in thunder and lightning!"

She then ran away; and they all separated: Cecilia was conveyed up stairs, and the worthy Dr. Lyster, loaded with acknowledgments of every kind, set out for the country.

Cecilia, still weak, and much emaciated, for some time lived almost wholly in her own room; where the grateful and solicitous attendance of Mortimer, alleviated the pain both of her illness and confinement: but as soon as her health permitted travelling, he hastened with her abroad.

Here tranquillity once more made its abode the heart of Cecilia; that heart so long torn with anguish, suspense and horror! Mrs. Delvile received her with the most rapturous fondness, and the impression of her sorrows gradually wore away, from her kind and maternal cares, and from the watchful affection and delighted tenderness of her son.

The Egglestons now took entire possession of her estate, and Delvile, at her entreaty, forbore showing any personal resentment of their conduct, and put into the hands of a lawyer the arrangement of the affair.[1]

They continued abroad some months, and the health of Mrs. Delvile was tolerably re-established. They were then

[1] "With respect, however, to the great point of Cecilia's fortune, I have much to urge in my own defence. . . . . I must frankly confess I shall think I have rather written a farce than a serious history, if the whole is to end, like the hack Italian operas, with a jolly chorus that makes all parties good and all parties happy! . . . . . Besides, I think the book, in its present conclusion, somewhat original, for the hero and heroine are neither plunged in the depths of misery, nor exalted to Unhuman happiness. Is not such a middle state more natural, more according to real life, and less resembling every other book of fiction? . . .

"You find, my dear daddy, I am prepared to fight a good battle here; but I have thought the matter much over, and if I am made to give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive, and the last page of any novel in Mr. Noble's circulating library may serve for the last page of mine, since a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for great riches, concludes them all alike."—*Miss Burney to Mr. Crisp*, April 6, 1782; *Diary*, p. 136, vol. ii.

summoned home by the death of Lord Delvile, who bequeathed to his nephew Mortimer his town house, and whatever of his estate was not annexed to his title, which necessarily devolved to his brother.

The sister of Mrs. Delvile, a woman of high spirit and strong passions, lived not long after him; but having, in her latter days, intimately connected herself with Cecilia, she was so much charmed with her character, and so much dazzled by her admiration of the extraordinary sacrifice she had made, that, in a fit of sudden enthusiasm, she altered her will, to leave her, and to her sole disposal, the fortune which, almost from his infancy, she had destined for her nephew. Cecilia, astonished and penetrated, opposed the alteration; but even her sister, now Lady Delvile, to whom she daily became dearer, earnestly supported it; while Mortimer, delighted to restore to her through his own family, any part of that power and independence of which her generous and pure regard for himself had deprived her, was absolute in refusing that the deed should be revoked.

Cecilia, from this flattering transaction, received a further conviction of the malignant falsehood of Mr. Monckton, who had always represented to her the whole of the Delvile family as equally poor in their circumstances, and illiberal in their minds. The strong spirit of active benevolence which had ever marked her character, was now again displayed, though no longer, as hitherto, unbounded. She had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence; and she had a motive for economy, in her animated affection for Mortimer.

She soon sent for Albany, whose surprise that she still existed, and whose rapture at her recovered prosperity, now threatened his senses, from the tumult of his joy, with nearly the same danger they had lately been menaced by terror. But though her donations were circumscribed by prudence, and their objects were selected with discrimination, she gave to herself all her former benevolent pleasure, in solacing his afflictions, while she softened his asperity, by restoring to him his favourite office of being her almoner and monitor.

She next sent for her own pensioners, relieved those distresses which her sudden absence had occasioned, and

renewed and continued the salaries she had allowed them. All who had nourished reasonable expectations from her bounty she remembered, though she raised no new claimants but with economy and circumspection. But neither Albany nor the old pensioners felt the satisfaction of Mortimer, who saw with new wonder the virtues of her mind, and whose admiration of her excellencies made his gratitude perpetual for the happiness of his lot.

The tender-hearted Henrietta, in returning to her new friends, gave way, with artless openness, to the violence of untamed grief; but finding Mr. Arnott as wretched as herself, the sympathy Cecilia had foreseen soon endeared them to each other, while the little interest taken in either by Mrs. Harrel made them almost inseparable companions.

Mrs. Harrel, wearied by their melancholy, and sick of retirement, took the earliest opportunity that was offered her of changing her situation; she married very soon a man of fortune in the neighbourhood, and, quickly forgetting all the past, thoughtlessly began the world again, with new hopes, new connections,—new equipages, and new engagements!

Henrietta was then obliged to go again to her mother, where, though deprived of all the indulgencies to which she was now become familiar, she was not more hurt by the separation than Mr. Arnott. So sad and so solitary his house seemed in her absence, that he soon followed her to town, and returned not till he carried her back its mistress. And there the gentle gratitude of her soft and feeling heart engaged from the worthy Mr. Arnott the tenderest affection, and, in time, healed the wound of his early and hopeless passion.

The injudicious, the volatile, yet noble-minded Belfield, to whose mutable and enterprising disposition life seemed always rather beginning than progressive, roved from employment to employment, and from public life to retirement, soured with the world, and discontented with himself, till vanquished, at length, by the constant friendship of Delvile, he consented to accept his good offices in again entering the army; and, being fortunately ordered out upon foreign service, his hopes were revived by ambition, and his prospects were brightened by a view of future honour.

The wretched Monckton, dupe of his own cunning and artifices, still lived in lingering misery, doubtful which was most acute, the pain of his wound and confinement, or of his defeat and disappointment. Led on by a vain belief that he had parts to conquer all difficulties, he had indulged without restraint a passion in which interest was seconded by inclination. Allured by such fascinating powers, he shortly suffered nothing to stop his course; and though when he began his career he would have started at the mention of actual dishonour, long before it was concluded, neither treachery nor perjury were regarded by him as stumbling-blocks. All fear of failing was lost in vanity, all sense of probity was sunk in interest, all scruples of conscience were left behind by the heat of the chase. Yet the unforeseen and melancholy catastrophe of his long arts, illustrated, in his despite, what his principles had obscured, that even in worldly pursuits, where fraud out-runs integrity, failure joins dishonour to loss, and disappointment excites triumph instead of pity.

The upright mind of Cecilia, her purity, her virtue, and the moderation of her wishes, gave to her in the warm affection of Lady Delvile, and the unremitting fondness of Mortimer, all the happiness human life seems capable of receiving:—yet human it was, and as such imperfect; she knew that, at times, the whole family must murmur at her loss of fortune, and at times she murmured herself to be thus portionless, though an HEIRESS. Rationally, however, she surveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happiness, there were none without some misery, she checked the rising sigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with cheerfullest resignation.

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